

SONGS OF EXUBERANCE

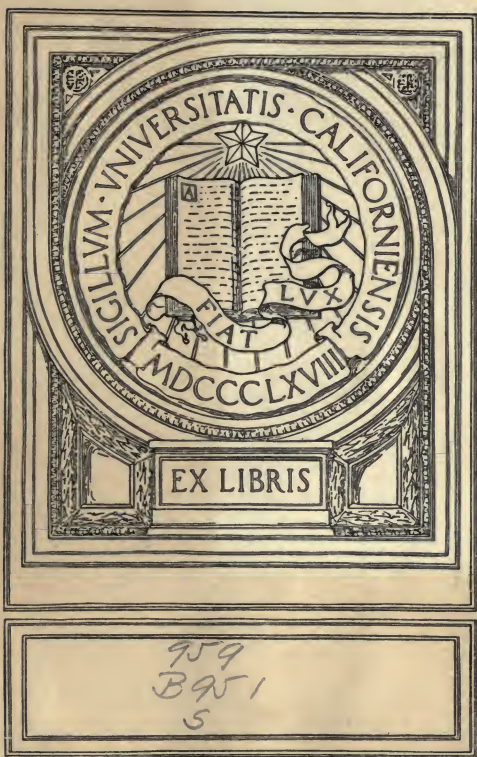


OSBERT BURDETT

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Songs of Exuberance

By the Same Writer

**The Silent Heavens :
A Divine Comedy
With a Postscript on
Mystery Plays for
Modern Readers
Op. 2**

**London : A. C. Fifield
13 Clifford's Inn, E.C.**

Songs of Exuberance,
Together with The
Trenches. By Osbert
Burdett

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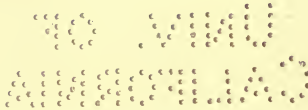
Op. 1



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Clifford's Inn, E.C., 1915

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DEDICATION

TO FLORENCE :

DOMNULAE MEAE DILECTISSIMAE

*I LAID a snare to trap my youthful love,
And baited it with rhymes, and prank'd it out
With musics, that my unsuspecting dove
Might think no dangerous enemy about.
Poor beguiled She struggled to fly, too late !
Her wings were meshed with metre, limed with song.
She dropt, a captive to her eager mate,
Pleading wild-eyed such tactics did him wrong.
But, as the fowler strokes the wounded wing
Of the poor bird his hawk has struck to earth,
Smooths the limp neck, and sighs that death should bring
So rough an end to such a lovely birth—
I sighed : to all but song was tameless She :
O, may she not prefer my song to me.*

1910

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Preface

I HAVE copied Samuel Butler in following the mode with which musicians indicate by the term "op." followed by a numeral, the order of the composition of their works. His defence of this imitation remains on record, and I certainly cannot improve upon it. But in addition to this, perhaps inspired by his illuminative ideas on the significance in practice of the theory of descent with modification, I have gone further back and have followed a still more respectable precedent, namely, that of affixing to each poem the date of the year in which it was written. This looks, I am afraid, rather like presuming unwarrantably upon the interest of posterity, for the affixing of dates to works of art is the only really unequivocal task left to editors and commentators, and though I share the trades-union prejudice against doing other fellows out of their job, two things may be said in favour of forestalling them.

The first is that the practice requires no apology, for nobody who is not interested in the development of the verses need worry with the dates at all. The second is

that what is valuable in any man's thought or in any religious system, or in any philosophy is not the conclusions which it records but the process by which they have been arrived at.

Nothing is more startling to the student of comparative religion, or of comparative science for the matter of that, than the similarity of the "truths" at which the various religious and scientific systems arrive. Huxley showed, for instance, that the Western theory of evolution was implicit in the Karma doctrine of the East. When an ordinary person observes for the first time that, in spite of the most bitter controversial differences, it is practically impossible throughout life to guess from a man's actions which particular body of doctrine he calls his own, he argues, if he is a shallow thinker, that all bodies of doctrine are equally futile, but if he is what Butler would have called a "nice person," he sees, as I am arguing, that it is not the conclusions at which one arrives but the process by which they are arrived at which are really important to be known. Any fool can adopt conclusions. That is why churches and sects and scientific and artistic societies of all sorts gain adherents so easily. It takes a wise man to arrive at them, which, in turn, explains why the lives of teachers differ so much from those of their disciples. A proverb, or a law of Nature, or a dogma, is the end of a very long process of thought; and proverbs are like offences in

this, that it needs be that proverbs come, but woe to the man's fame by whom they come. It is an accident if his name survives. This, apparently, is History's acknowledgment of the fact that nobody seems able to learn wisdom from them. To digest a proverb, or a clause in the creed, some crisis has to force us to experience the process out of which it has burst into light, like a star in our darkness, with pain, and speed, and travail. It is the process, rather than the proverb, which we have to know.

To my own verses, therefore, I have affixed the date of the year in which they were written, so that anyone who is interested to understand certain obvious contradictions may have a clue, if he wishes to pursue it, as to whether any particular poem is the simple expression of a mood, or the embodiment of a belief which, as the date will explain when compared with those affixed to poems written later, I have continued to hold from one time to another. Further than this it would obviously be silly to attempt to go. Ruskin's own indignant footnotes of criticism in the later editions of his books remain to show how foolish it is even for an inspired writer to take his beliefs too seriously. Orthodoxies tend to become evil because they tend to become static by the familiar process of exalting the letter above the spirit. Thought should grow like every other living thing, for which what is true to-day may very likely

require to be restated to-morrow. Indeed two wise writers have described Truth, the one as "a contradiction in terms," and the other as "that whose contradictory is also true." By pursuing the track my thoughts have taken in these poems the reader can judge to what extent they have been growing, if he has a mind to try. If not, the dates can be forgotten as easily as the verses.

OSBERT BURDETT.

BUSHEY, 1913-1915

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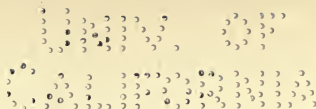
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The Trenches

To the Memory of Rupert Brooke, a fellow Kingsman

(The Youth, Two Soldiers, God, Fear, Death,
and the Life to Come.)

Juvenis quidam :

If I go ? The great adventure's waiting !
War, riskiest, most exhilarating
Of all man's sports, the sportsman has to-day :
Sport naked, pure, and bloody-fronted,
For man the Hunter—man the hunted,
Sport for the king of all the beasts of prey !

Miles quidam :

" If I should die " :—or there or here
It can be once, once only. There
I shall face Death, here wait his search for me.
Nay, I'll go where " every man is wanted,"
(So they say) who never granted
Me, in time of peace, worth much to be.

Miles secundus :

“ If I should die : Life still so green,
 So much before me, hopes so seen ;
 To leave them all unwon, what waste would be !
 To fall with twenty by a mortar,
 A unit of machine-made slaughter,
 A $\frac{1}{4}$ drop of rain in Europe's bloody sea.

Deus loquitur : Fides tua te salvum faciet.

Up My mountain, at My feet
 Dreams and deeds like lovers meet :
 Their parting done, not lost, not lost at all !
 Your desire to do will make
 Life the richer for its sake.
 Who dreams the deed, or acts the dream, does all !

You go sadly, seem alone.
 Have I, then, not set My throne
 Above Death's battle, where Hell is outpoured ?
 Both I overcame. The trenches,
 Which English blood and German drenches—
 Dare you there dethrone Me, I, the Lord ?

Fear : Timor autem respondet.

Like a cavern echo-haunted
 Where the dank weeds grow undaunted,
 And the curious sunlight never pries ;
 Where live early dreams unshriven—
 Deeds alone are dreams forgiven—
 Opens Death's dark future to my eyes.

Shapes and seemings, as I knew them
When enthusiasm blew them

Like obedient leaves before the blast
Of eager youth, now turn to mock me,
Rising derisively to shock me,
As I shrink before the grave aghast.

The dream and the deed, like lovers parted,
Haunt this cave and, grown faint-hearted,
Each weeps among the shadows for its mate.
Hopes are accusations there to curse me ;
Fear is grown remorse the more to pierce me,
Me, who thought me master of my fate.

The light is green and cold within,
The damp walls trickle, as begin
Fear's dreadful ghouls to crawl about his cave,
Dragging their legs like hopes grown weary,
With a motion slow, and cold, and eerie :
How far more kind the worms within the grave !

Death.

In the grave there is escape ;
The dream changes, and the tape
Is breasted with a sob, beyond the goal !
We are other than we were.
Never can the old despair
Pursue us, when the body leaves the soul.

Disunited, cut apart,
Love—the body, the soul art,
Divide, dissever, go their separate way :
One doom for each, but not the doom
Still to be prisoners in one room,
Sole door for each from which is Death's decay.

Flux, and reflux, and superflux,
(Like the eddies and ripples the river chucks
To the sedge it kisses ere it leaves behind)
Are death, decay, the gate of the cave,
The passing beyond the weir of the wave—
For Death is only matter's change of mind.

The Life to Come.

For the soul no death, but escape indeed !
Escape from self, and the yoke of self-need :
To be born anew, and out of God's good mind
To start re-made ; new heights to gain,
With finer faith, and clearer brain,
One birthday nearer Life—if Death be kind.

Dear Death, I pray you lift from me
This present personality,
A broken reed, on which should your hand lean
Even your fleshless bones would not avail
But it would pierce you. Bruised and frail,
Re-make it, Death, re-make it straight and
green !

“ Who shall roll us away the stone ? ”

The stone Time's soldiers sealed upon

The soul imprisoned in the flesh called “ I.”

Who but Death ?—the angel, straight

Sent on swift wings from heaven's gate,

Death, who gives us our immortality.

So, true soldiers, let us go

Facing Death, the friend we know,

Bravely casting coward fears aside.

When life seems not worth strong crying,

Death promises new birth, not dying,

Death becomes the Groom and Life the Bride !

These we wed now, in a marriage

Which gives each a proper carriage

For such a father's, such a mother's child.

Here and now, their child we may be,

Surpassing either parent, pray we,

Loving both, and to both reconciled.

We shall neither wish to die :

That would be “ father ” to deny ;

Nor long to live : that “ mother ” to offend.

“ I die daily,” said St. Paul,

“ To live in Christ.” So may we all !

This is Eternal Life, World without End.

Lyrics of the Joy of Earth

Ode to the Spirit of Rain

A THOUSAND voices had the earth last night ;
 Each tiny rut sang loud,
 And every runnel gurgled with delight,
 And panted every cloud
 To pour its treasures on the waiting earth.
 Straight streams descended ; every bough became
 A conduit of the laughs of the rain.
 And, purling in their mirth,
 Ripples, like wild horses none can tame,
 Raced down the roadway mirroring the stars.
 While, as to merge the earth in heaven again,
 Black whirlpools floated on the fields,
 (Each cloud a water-harvest yields)
 And every woodland spirit burst his bars.
 A gentle lisp shook the leaves,
 And patter, patter, patter on the sheaves
 The raindrops' feet were falling.
 Everywhere
 The water ran in whispers through the air,
 Untied the tangles of the maiden-hair,
 And lay on dock leaves sprawling.
 In mists it floated down the valleys,
 And drove in gusts through narrow alleys.
 For moorland, hill and street in turn obtain
 Their stop upon the reed-pipes of the rain.

The trees of English woods are many-mouthed :

In that great orchestra each tree
Plays his own note, and laughingly
The poplar shakes, the aspen quivers
In little runs. Like hillside rivers
His notes upon the waiting air are thrown.
The great oak answers with a groan
As, like a helmsman at the helm,
He drives the wind upon the splitting elm.
Pale with affright the silver birch
Weeps like a blusket with alarm ;
While the horse-chestnut gives a lurch,
Raising against the wind a rocking arm.

Each plays his note : the hazel nuts
Swish in the wind, the weeping willow sighs ;—
Whether the wind roars, whispers low, or struts
In quick March airs, great sorrow on her lies.

For everything that moves the wind awakes.

But every silent thing,

Each stone, each particle of sand,
Each wain-rut, and the very land
That never moves to either hand,
That cannot make us understand

By any words or gesturing,

Finds its rare speech the rarest gain
When alphabets are offered by the rain.

Ode to the Spirit of Rain 25

It is the common language of the earth,
When all checked impulses exchange
Their secrets, as the sweet scents range
Up from the bosom of moist earth,
Over the grasses, through the clear air,
Along the hedges and field-paths where
The waters linger in prints of shoes :—
Oh, the soft moist scents that the land doth ooze !
In shoutings Nature's news is spread,
The rainy rubble rears its head
To talk with all the forest trees,—
Recalling that their common birth
Is sung in rain-sent melodies.
All still things, which the truant winds despise,
Find music then for their shrill replies ;
Praising the rain for vanquished dearth
Of speech, in ripples that comprise
Co-harmony with every tree
That boasts all day vocality !

On huddling wort and heaven-high pine
The night's rain jets of water threw,
Searching each frond however fine
With decorate drops of diamond dew,
Scattering everywhere jewels.
Now is the hour of earth's renewals ;
Now her green refines its fire,
And washes itself in the cloudy wine
Of water-vats that yield a dye,—
A sharper green, a subtler blue,—
Which all man's crafts to man deny,

Which no man's labour can renew..
It is the piercing hue
Of youth, with youth's fresh passions gay,
Washing the summer's dust away,
Adding another scent to the hay,
Its faith in future sunshine youthful too !

1910

In Dover Museum

MONSTERS and dust ! The prickly porpentine,
A Chinese snail, the tunny's rainbow scales,
Sea-frogs with dreadful jaws, the sperm of whales,
The wombat, fossilled creatures of the brine,
Land toads ; from the bird-haunted hyaline
Martins, choughs, tits ; our quivering eyesight quails
Seeing the peacocks' many-splendour'd tails,—
All various vessels of the insurgent wine,
Which stripes the zebra's flanks, and hoops the worm ;
In pinioned ease upon the midway air
Poises the hawk, protects the pachyderm,
And finds the pard his pelt of shaggy hair.
Fresh forms fast follow these :—still to affirm
The womb of Life's exuberant despair.

1913

The River's Burden

THERE was a cry in his heart for labour without
rest,

So he turned to the work before him, as a bird to
building her nest,

For high in the eaves of the future he would set his
home at last

Where the happy winds are laughing, and the trees rock
in the blast.

The sun surveyed the heavens, like a father his child
at play,

And earth clasped his knees like a daughter, who makes
her sire grow gay

At the thought of his ancient springtime, and the joy
of her spring to be

When she grows tall as an elder, and straight as a poplar
tree.

For the wealth of the man's wide meadows, and the
grace of his arms at the scythe

Are moulding the lines of her figure, and giving strength
to the lithe

Young limbs, which muscles slip over as wind o'er a
flowing stream,

Moulding its curves with featness as the painter moulds
his dream.

The days of his early rising, and his hands' work for
their bread
Establish his roof, and make happy the busy, gray
homestead,
Where work is the joy of morning, and sleep the sweet
of night
When men have loved their labour ; where art is the
naïve delight

Of man in doing well what there is need to be done :
Such art as we see in sunshine, or such as flowers have
won.
The man turned from the garden where the birds were
busy at song,
The song of spring accomplished, the song of nests built
strong.

He passed from the broad rose-trellis where roses blos-
somed wide
And he knew their petals opened to the sun in happy
pride,
For they had grown and laboured unseen the winter
through
When earth and stones lay heavy, and cold the spring
winds blew.

But as the spring days lengthened, and the hardened
ground grew warm,
The joy of work accomplished, the growing sense of form

Freshened them with promise that their lovelihead was
in sight,
And petals slowly unfolded, and growth grew into delight.

So, ere the summer passed, the marvellous petals blew :
This was the song they sang him ; this was the art they
knew.

So there were thanks in his heart to God as he entered
the door
Where the cool shadows wrapt him, and sweet was the
darkened floor.

And he said, " I think to Godward to give no prayer or
praise,
But that my happy labour is such as angels raise
In his golden city busy, or on his work to run
Down by the golden river, where his barges trail along."

But in the keen, dark silence which lay on the house,
like the bloom
Of lavender in a linen-chest, a sigh ran through the room.
He knew it, the river's burden, down at the garden end
Where the poppy and cow-parsley from height and richness
bend.

The burden grew and trembled, like petals upon the air,
The petals of later summer when the autumn wind is
near.

He rose, as though one drew him from the homestead
and the cool
Of the old house, and down the path he wended to the pool.

For while the noon lay heavy, and the flowers scarcely
breathed,
The river ran beneath the sky, but a sigh its bosom
wreathed ;—
Not the sigh of the ripple, nor the chuckle about a stone,
Nor the laugh of the little eddy, nor the deep pool's
monotone,—

But of waters that are troubled, not with the mill-
wheels' grind,
But with the traffic of cities, where machines have made
men blind
To the colour of air and water, to the very streets they
tread,
To the ugliness around them, to the beauty that is dead.

For did they see the streets, or the houses where they
dwell,
Or the sights which evil habit has made them know so
well,
The cities would be ended, the sights put out of mind ;
But these things are because men dwell in cities of the
blind.

He stood, and the river held him as a story holds a child.
His heart grew warm as he heard that song so strange
and mild :
“ I run beside your garden, my pace is swift and strong,
And steady and sweet is the rhythm of my unceasing
song.

“ For years beneath your windows my voice has wildered
the air,
And good it was to lie at night, and let me drowse the ear ;
And rare it was at noonday to rest upon my side,
And passing sweet to cool your hands in my quick-
running tide.

“ I come by many reaches, and run by many a bend,
But my passage by your garden is not my journey's end.
The wisdom of the river is a wisdom old and long,
And to its measured rhythm as many notes belong

“ As the various grasses utter when the breeze is fresh
at dawn,
And the ripples run over the meadow as the dew grows
gray on the lawn.
You work at work you love ; you rest and sleep is sweet,
And you hear children's laughter when you sit down to
meat.

“ The sweep of the scythe in the meadow is the song
you like to hear,
And all earth's changing seasons are the pictures you
hold dear.
The barn which you have builded, and the well-house
lately made
Will give men joy to enter when you in earth are laid.

“ The apples fall in at the windows, your life is rooted
strong ;
What, then, is the undercurrent of trouble in my song ? ”

The man said : " There haunts me, and it comes with a
sense of pain
The cry in your cadenced voices, the motif in your
refrain.

" You tell me of the others in the dark and gloomy town,
Who have no joy in the work they do, and fear a master's
frown ;
Who know not leisure, nor plenty, who hear not the bird
on the hill,
And lay them not down heart-happy at the tasks their
hands fulfil.

" These are the joyless men, who have made sweet work
a curse,
And the thoughts of their minds are evil, and the art of
their hands is worse
Than men have ever looked on since the days when
Man's desire
Wrought no more lovely fancies than faces in the fire.

" These are the joyless men, whose hearts are starved
and wan,
For as joy went from their work, so art from their life
has gone.
Their crying shadows your waters, their grief runs in
your tide
Back to the mowers and reapers, and the happy country-
side."

The river said : " My riddle it takes strong hearts to read.
But is there in the country the happy world you need ?
Or does the grief of London, like a clinging, evil thing
Come between you and the sunshine, and creep in the
evening ?

" Is it for you, then, to turn and shoulder the burden
again ?

Your happy work has shown you, unlike those who are
dull of brain,

The misery they cherish, that blighting of heart and of
head

Making art an escape, work a curse, and hope a dream
of the dead."

Leaving the man to wonder what was his part to mend,
" My passage here," said the river, " is not my journey's
end."

1915

Under the Leaves

THE ghosts of many dreams are these,
Delicious, blest,
Seed-bearing catkins on the trees
Wind-shaken and possessed
By music blithe, or pure, or sad
As any Orpheus ever had.

1914

A Night on the Woodland

POOR fair and foolish Gwendolen,
Foolish in love if fair to men,
What hopes of fun had you that night
That, threading through the pale moonlight,
You went at the appointed hour,
Careless of field and tree and flower,
To meet your lover in the lane ?
Lover, said I, but Love is fain
To find for him another name
With less of beauty, more of shame,
To sum his heart in meeting you.
And, Gwendolen, it were but true
That you too love's name should disown.
Love's golden apples are not grown
In a wild waste of garden plot
Where passion has no time to rot,
So shallow is the soil and sand
It sprung from. Can you understand,—
Because from sheer ennui you play
Like other girls in wonted way
With every boy the country round,—
The one heart-throb of Love's own wound ?
And, as you walk there now to greet
His face, where no lamps light the street,
Is it love you think on, or the plex
Of latent, vague desires of sex ?
The little contacts that grow stale,

As current coin from every male,
But which, between a lover's lips,
Make all the night a blind eclipse,
As though earth listened for love's hour
To learn the secret of his power.

That other girl, whose plight you scorn
From morning sun to moonlit dawn,
Whose pale face from the curtain peeps
By day, who while the village sleeps
Slips out, her baby in her hands,
More of love's mystery understands :
She saw the chasm, took the leap,
And sacrificed to Love the sleep
Love never breaks for foolish Gwen,
The plaything of a dozen men :
Who fondle, tease you, kiss and go
Thinking to while an hour or so
With callous kisses that have lost
The strangeness that they ever cost.
So old the habit now has grown
That love and lust alike disown
The ritual you have made your own.

Poor little Gwen, had your steps been
Love's messengers across the green,
Love, not the moonlight, would have lit
Your footsteps through the dark of it.
And your heart would have been the song
Earth waited for amid the throng
That jubilees in earth and sky

When love and night are walking by.
The shadows of the wood extend
Love-lisping lovers to befriend,
As if the trees of every wood
Were generous of their solitude,
And would embrace the lighted moor
With kindred darkness from their store.
You would have thanked them had you been
One for whose joy they intervene.
But all you think of as you go
Is that the wood was always so,
A handy place where one may sit
With Will or George at night in it.
The wealth of nature poets sing
Not hers but ours is, it we bring
So welling up it makes by art
Each flower a conduit at the heart.
And his, who comes to meet you so,
Has his heart caught the after-glow,
Where sky and sun ebb out in light
Day's ecstasy of long delight ?
The tremors of this evening sky
Make the heart mad with ecstasy,
As if the veil would rend at last,
This moment's beauty ne'er be cast,
As if eternity would spring
Triumphant from this weltering
Of sunset cloud and blinding light,
For ever be a wild delight
Of culminating colour throe,—
But not for you shall this be so.

What thinks the man you go to greet
 Beyond, where no lamps light the street ?
 His thoughts, are they the thoughts of love,
 Those thoughts you hope he's thinking of ?
 His heart-beats then, the truth to tell,
 Are not to his heart audible.
 The moon still waits the ultimate hour
 When his heart's bud shall burst in flower,
 And passion like a rapture run
 Through every pulse, a colophon
 Of culminant ardours, till the stress
 At the last throb sinks ardourless.
 He comes to over-urge again
 The something less than joy or pain,
 Which tries to be and cannot be
 When you sit hand-unitedly,
 Though earth and youth alike combine
 To change his heart's blood into wine.
 Has youth for him now lost his power,
 Have you not still your maiden dower
 Of health, bright eyes, warm throat and mouth,—
 Enough to magnify to drouth
 Youth's ready senses, one would think !
 O for desire and her to link
 Their separate sweetness ! So he feels
 As his heart-longing fast congeals :
 Enough to lure him out at night,
 And, in Love's name, put love to flight.

He hears her footsteps, and her laugh
 Quivers his nerves, the aftermath

Of many meetings, nights like this,
Ending—will this too?—with her kiss
Prettily pouted towards him, it
Uttering for love's coin counterfeit.

Into the wood's deep heart they go,
She playful for once, for once half slow
To yield her body to his grasp,
Trying his rough hands to unclasp
From their quick purchase on her dress.
Flushing at its own loneliness
Her face burns as she struggles, drops
Breathless beneath the bracken tops.
Then with her half-waked longing bare
She lets him kiss her : O forbear
This once, her heart cries, guessing well
Love is not so untamable
That he must tire the flesh's control
Before his wing has stirred the soul
To subtle knowledge of his ways,
As the winds brush the water-ways
Before the clouds are thick with storm.
She lies there still, her arms conform
A twining necklace of twin curves.
Her beauty strikes his startled nerves !
Quite calmly now he lies beside,
And lets her quick warm breath subside.
So young she seems ; his instincts vow
She's holier, rarer than just now
He thought when waiting for his name
To prove her quarry for his game

One half-hour back.

What change is this
Which makes him, reverent, wait a kiss
Of her accord, should she think well
To yield what erst was forceable ?
To-night, at length, it seems to her
That what so many nights aver
Will be no more so, trembling she
(On outskirts of love's mystery !)
Half apprehends that love is not
Of many kisses new-begot.
Virginity awakes at last,
Brims o'er with blushes for her past.
She knows the first alarm of Eve,
Love-taught her beauty to reprieve
From God's and Adam's waking eyes,
When Love first entered Paradise.
Her soul is weeping. Ah ! poor Gwen,
To-night, a maiden Magdalen,
You know what shame is : be forgiven
Not that you loved much, and have given
Your body to love's uses, no,
You never loved, but now you know
All that love might be, and foresee
The heaven of that sad ecstasy.
To prostitute the soul like this,
Make love's betrayer every kiss,
Ah Christ, how bitter a thing it is !
When the soul knows its nakedness
What night can hide its piteousness ?
That kiss, too, you must give him will

Shrivel the last shred, and instil
A fire in him that thrills outright
The last, sharp sob of your good-night.

Go then, and from this night of pain
Let your heart bide her hour, and then—
You'll bear away from this night's weeping
Something you're not ashamed of keeping.

Poor fallen Nell will have to-morrow
One girl who understands her sorrow.

1909

Over the Stile

WE left the road where the gay fields pass,
(While the afternoon dreamed in the summer
heat),

For the blue enchantment of the wheat,
The green enchantment of the grass.

The land was lazy, and sleepy its streams,
As our minds floated out and drifted far
To the fringe of the sky, where a single star
Focussed the evening's beams.

The scarf of the sky fluttered wide and chill,
The palest saffron ribbed with gold,
Fading at last where the shadowy fold
Of oncoming night had curtained the hill.

1914

Between the Bramble and the Briar

BETWEEN the bramble and the briar
The spider spins her web to-day ;
And lazy flies, with wings of fire,
Blunder across her rigging. They
Buzz while she sits, with silent stare,
Across her swaying gossamer.

Anon, one happier than the rest,
And drunk with sunshine, to and fro
Staggers on wings which, unoppressed
With fear or caution, let her go
Across the gaps that in the shade
Disguise the spider's ambushade.

The web shakes with the beat of wings ;
The spider rushes to its edge,
Seizes the fly and round it flings
A net, unravelling ridge on ridge
About the fly, which seems to spin
To death, as the quick fangs go in.

After Four O'Clock

THE day folds up its petals like a flower.
The shadows on the hills are blue and gray,
The gray sky leans above ; the faint mists stray
In horizontal clouds from hour to hour.
Across the fresh, keen air sweet scents have power
To evoke blithe spirits from the dying day.
Peace trembling falls, and tired feet grow gay
As all the sky becomes a spirit-bower.

The heavy noon is here left far behind ;
I look back on glad years without a sigh,
Leaving the broken fragments where they lie
Where Time's cool hand revives an unquiet mind.
For, offering up my load to the blue sky,
I left the wood which I had entered blind.

The School of Summer

IF you would learn to woo, sang Earth my mother,
 Follow the sweet flowers' way :
 The rose's splendours which all fears do smother,
 The lily's pureness that all doubt doth lay ;
 Or the wild-rose which clambers towards the skies
 And blows a kiss to heaven, and then dies.

Gay faring winds blow kisses everywhere,
 Grasses are wantons rude :
 These are the lovers who find all loves fair,
 Who love the wooing better than the woo'd.
 Like the lewd bee marauding o'er the wold
 Who leaves no flower unlooted of its gold.

Go seek the glow-worm with her patient lamp,
 The primrose who the sun
 To darkest coverts lures, that night and damp
 Are lighted by her buds when day is done.
 True love must nurse a flame as sure as that
 Which all the wanton world will marvel at.

But if for lordlier wooing you would try,
 Mark the laburnum's bloom,
 Who tosses yellow fires to all the sky,
 Whose gaudy splendours summer's self illume.
 His riot of yellow passion's fever is,
 Pursuing love to his extremest kiss.

See to what height the roystering sunflower rears
His ragged beauty, mark
His pride of stature, and his kingly wears,
Which, ere the dawn doth rise, affright the dark,
Flaunting his conquests over every field,
Shaking a shield of flame upon the weald.

These are proud wooers, but in beggars' guise
The vagrant weeds do creep,
All bashful of their charms, with downcast eyes
To where the willows bend o'er them and weep
That Love should sometimes stoop himself so low :
Beauty and tatters well together go.

The daffodil is poet of the Spring,
His golden trumpets blow
Love-songs to every wind which passes, fling
Triumphant musics, all sweet lovers know
His call to battle : how the wood nymphs flee
When his horn winds the hunt across the lea !

Or mark the jonquil with her drooping head
That faints with sweetness, see
How shy and graceful is her stealthy tread
Beneath the leafage of some giant tree.
Affrighted with Love's eagerness she hangs,
A virgin tremulous at coming pangs.

These pass their ways, a pageant of sweet things,
Each in his own wild way

Obtruding love on winter's hard heart-strings,
Breaking the land with beauty, day by day
Waking a thousand horns in every field,
Calling the man to win, the maid to yield.

O hide yourself apart, in April bend
To Earth an open ear.
Unpack your conscience at the city's end,
And fling yourself upon the waking year !
Leave all and follow : where the blue-bells foam
Over the woodland I await you, come !

1910

Burrage

BEAUTIFUL burrage, whose leaves like a green night
Break into stars more blue than the blue sky,
Content, although so many sunsets vie
In filmy mists with thine, we feel delight
Thinking the heavens mimic in their height
A briefer beauty than thy seeds supply.
Blow, in my garden, nights which will not die
When dawn has put the sky's last star to flight !

1913

The Wind in the Boughs

WITH chattering as of birds, the crispèd leaves
Cling like cold, nervous sparrows to the boughs,
And down the autumn sky the morning grieves
In wan grey clouds, through which the winds arouse
November mists that steal upon the meads
Like shadowy armies massed for phantom deeds.

Earth's green is splintered into brown and gold,
And whirling leaves set boiling by the wind
Fret as they dance in mazes manifold,
Or fly through the chill air, or, sparsely thinned,
Beat up against the hedges, fall in vain
Like some dead hope, which life stirs once again.

The woods are shattered, every bough is bare,
And God has hid Himself and seems to say :
" Naked I was, and mocked by human care,
Starving, and so turned empty away."
And all the while the wind rolls on his ride,
And takes the stripped woods in a rapid stride.

The branches sigh upon the voiceful air.
The rivers hurry cold and dark along.
The stream forgets to murmur, and despair
Calls with the music of some antique song.
Earth waits her bed the wintry snows will bring,
Drowsy with sleep, indifferent to spring.

My Little Songs

MY little songs are all unsung
 On this cold day,
 While yet within my heart is rung
 A lilt my lips would play.
 O little songs, O wandering tune,
 Where is the rhythm of your rune?

Pale, fitful sunlight breaks between
 Bare, barren trees,
 And the brown earth, for lack of green,
 Wears mists upon the leas.
 O little, wandering autumn songs,
 What dreamy rhyme to you belongs?

Cadences, like stray blossoms blown
 Here and there in the grass,
 Thrust up their heads, and then are mown
 Where Time's soft scythe doth pass
 Ere song can change to full-blown flowers
 The dreamy substance of these hours.

February Sunshine

THIS sunshine on the windy bitten lea
Almost can draw the teeth of the east wind
Which, anxious to remind
The stirring Earth of winter's tyranny,
Whips the mild air to cold, while the loud sea
Lashes the land in vain lament for Spring's insurgency.

Yet summer's promise flames from the hard ground,
And every yellow crocus calls the sun
From heaven, no more to shun
The sky's dim vault in which the only sound
Has been the winds' play all the winter round,
Where the cloud-shadows chased away the green from
vale and mound.

Now the glad Earth with stirring life is gay,
And Spring is mutinous with peeping flowers,
For every bank she dowers
With the audacious primrose, while the may
Dusts many a hedge-row pink and white to-day,
As if late frosts had flushed to see the sunlight's length-
ening hours.

But winter still is jealous of his reign,
And, like some wounded leopard in his lair,
Still shakes his hoary hair,
Withdrawing back only to pounce again,—
His dying onslaughts fiercer for his pain,—
So March and April yet may pay a tribute fresh and fair.

For many a bud too eager for his rout
Has borrowed of the sunshine heedlessly,
Nor thought of usury,
And opening its petals without doubt
Has taken largess, trespassing about,
Nor thought to die because it willed so early to come out.

The young year waits the issue with mild eyes,
Scarce yet convinced that Spring will win the day,
And weakly pleads delay.
To move her tyrant's heart with tears and sighs
She vainly waits, and patches her blue skies
With clouds which make the flowers afraid of winter in
disguise.

1913

The Pool

LIKE souls on the waves of eternity
The brown leaves float and fall
On this still pool, where each tall tree
Drops shadows over all,
And the heart finds peace in this leafy dell
Where the silence has sweet things to tell.

Shadows are mirrored in its glass ;
A whole world lies below :
Inverted trees and hanging grass,
While the silver clouds bestow
Colours there more soft and rare
Than are ever found in the upper air.

The pool has a playmate in the wind,
Whose ripples come and go
Like gentle smiles on the face of a friend
Happy as I and thou,
Who stare at our shadows on its face
Sharing the sweetness of this place.

This hollow is in the steep hill's side
Skirted by trees, beneath
The stagnant pool where the shadows ride
Soft as the thoughts of death,
Or sleep, to one who weary with care
Has sought repose where green fields are.

The leaves all day sail to and fro
On the water's face,
Where the life above and the dream below
Unite in one meeting-place.
Oh could you and I so blend in one view
The dream-world and the daylight too !

If we could live here all the year
Should we not also find
Imagination burn more clear
In a more receptive mind ?
With a tent and fire beside this pool
Mere living would be beautiful.

What are the joys of solitude
But a thronged yet empty place
With Jacob's ladder set in a wood
Of peopled loneliness,
Where every sense is tuned to seize
The music of the tranquil breeze.

I think one's troubled face would grow
In softer curves, one's eyes
More windy blue, with voice more low
And ears more apt to prize
(If one lived here) the swaying trees
Which bear each season's messages.

For in this dell, and by this pool
Descends, as at a shrine,

A radiant peace so beautiful,
 With shadows so benign
 That travellers sleeping by this hill
 Would sadly wake against their will.

1915

A May Morning

WE walked along and let the road unfold
 Its changing dips, its curves of long delight,
 The sunlight through the branches streaming,
 The buds just open from their dreaming,
 As at each turn the roadway ran in sight,—
 Earth was still drowsy from the winter's cold.

Sweet was it thus as we were wandering :

A sudden light now lit upon our way
 Two laughing men who sawed for pleasure
 A beam, while, huddling in their leisure,
 Sheep crowded under trees beset with may.

Whence came that light which set our hearts to sing ?

A cock crew hard, and at his stertorous cry
 A subtler music than musicians know,
 Where melody was lost in sweeter issues,
 The soul being drawn from out the senses' tissues,
 Started to life at this cock's stertorous crow.
 And some old memory stirred my friend and I.

Two laughing men, some sheep, and the wide sky.

1913

The Dover Cliffs

FREE of the town, on Shakespeare's Cliff I turned
 To watch the thin arms of the harbour glow
 In the pale sunshine. Well has this cliff earned
 The fame sweet Will's outlasting lines bestow !
 The heavy breakers pounded on the shore
 And flung their spume high up the shingle beach
 But to return with rasping voice once more
 As rank on rank new waves beat up the breach.
 Exulting in the sunshine and the breeze,
 Which fanned the grass, and hissed in it like fire,
 I swung along the cliff-path in full ease,
 Rinsed by new spirit tide-waves of desire.
 But here the chalk in mortary ruts has run,
 Where the scant traffic had sufficed to make
 Cups in the chalky soil, whose oozeings dun
 Suck limpet-like, each ooze a mimic lake.
 The beacon hill once by, I strode adown
 Slopes of greensward all lonely to the sea,
 With only gulls and steamers to discrown
 The peaceful absence of humanity.
 But lo ! ahead a little cabin reared
 Few fragile boards against the windy sky,
 And through one pane a lonely coastguard peered
 Inviting me to talk with eager eye.
 " It's lonely work up here, sir, yet 'tis so
 I could not leave a life spent near the sea

But I should thin away, like flowers that blow
In some starved playground of a pent city."
"How do you while your hours away?" I cried,
For this is truth, as every man may know,
It is to strangers who are quite untried
Men most unpack their hearts of joy or woe.
"I have a wife at home, sir, and ten sons,
The first of whom have early gone to sea,
While I sit here and think out rebus-puns
For money in her latest pregnancy.
Perhaps my wits are dull, sir, but it seems
A hopeless task for me to win a prize.
Each week I buy the paper for its schemes
Though every name but mine rewards my eyes.
For verbal jerks and wordy quips they give,—
If they do give indeed, sir,—tens of poun's,
And it seems hard that I, who need to live,
Cannot filch from these lonely hours two crowns."

I looked at him amazed, (a gentle soul
Shone in the porches of his deep-set eyes),
That he, who sat so far from men's control,
Should be the puppet of their enterprise.
"If you should ever need," he said again,
"Scraps of ship-lore, or memories of the sea,
Come back; since mutual aid is good for men,
And share my talk, and spend an hour with me."
He ceased. The sun embanked on streaming clouds
Left the blue sky half widowed of his light,
So I turned westwards, till the corded shrouds
Of Folkestone shipping swam into my sight.

The Warren sprawled below, black ash and gray
 As burnt by fire, it scarred the Cliffs' steep side,
 Where winding paths led downwards to betray
 The careless traveller to the rising tide.
 The yearning sea, the wistful man above,
 The wind in the cliff grasses, the brief sun,
 A walk alone,—what more need men to prove
 That life is passion, and all life is one ?

1913

The Weather

WEATHER in town is one. It rains or shines
 And men work on, indifferent to the speech
 By which great Nature tries her law to teach
 That every mood of the sky a joy assigns.
 But on the woodland, where the tall gaunt pines
 Draw out the stop of every wind, and reach
 Bare tufted arms that sigh as on a beach,
 Each day bears its own burden nor repines.

In autumn when the elm trees toss and fret,
 When winds blow blusterous clouds across the skies
 And townsmen sigh bad weather, and regret
 Their fireside comforts, the rough man descries
 Here too a season's sweetness and his eyes
 Reflect the weather and applaud the wet.

1912

Summer Haze

A BLOSSOMY garden sheltered by tall trees,
A murmuring stream,
Green mounds and summer scents to make me dream,
A leafy music for the wandering breeze
To improvise in sun-sweet harmonies :

These where I lie
Make up the happiness of hot July.

Or in the busy farmyard by the stacks
An echo of the men
Calling, a boy astride the jingling backs
Of the cart-horses in whose lurching tracks
The wain returns ; the cock treading the hen :

These in an August sun
Make life sweet labour, sleep a thievish one.

Or idly on a fading afternoon,
Where yellow fields
Bend backs to winds as tides to the new moon,
The buxom earth a music-harvest yields ;
Delicious songs of undetected tune,
An orchestra of scent
Proclaim the way which sweet September went.

And where the river spreads out to a pool
A lazy splash
Of a fish rising, where the ripples wash,
Breaks on the stillness which elsewhere doth rule,

Sound questioning Silence as more beautiful :

Two graces here

Flatter with equal music at my ear.

The birds fly later in this summer air,

Scorning to nest

While the sun lingers in the rose-gray west

As though, face-buried in sweet Vesper's hair,

He had mistook her for Aurora there ;

Night overborne

Lets to-day's lightfoot hours melt into dawn.

1914

The First of March

NOW when the trumpet of the daffodil
Runs in glad sound across the dome of Spring,

And mating birds chatter on every hill,

And even townsmen's thoughts are on the wing,

And every thorn in tiny leaf of green

Stars with fire-clusters hedge-ways by the road,

And slanting sunlight glows in a new sheen,

And earth is staggering less beneath her load :

I, Atlas-armed, can people the young day

With dreams more joyful than the winter night

Evoked from fireside ease and drowsy lay,

Day-dreams that kindle in the warm sunlight

Cities where Life may dwell, and all men be

Sharers in Nature's immortality.

1915

A July Day

SUNLIGHT is rippling over the grass
Where the shadows dart and the blithe birds pass
Chasing each other to and fro
In a dance on the lawny floor below.
From leafy branches overhead
A trellis to the sky is spread
On which with petal-shimmering gleams
The golden rose of morning beams.
And the humming bee and the waving bough
Sway in a measure stately, slow,
Drowsing the ear and drowsing the eye
With rhythm of dance and melody.
For even the scattered stones grow warm
And the drifting flight of gnats in a swarm
Hangs like a cloud in the brilliant air,—
An eddy of life in the atmosphere,
While the soft toads pant in the leafy shade
Where the spiders are busy in ambuscade.
The stream may be crossed from stone to stone,
And the water chirps, and the dandelion
Burns with hard light on the grassy sea
In constellated brilliancy ;
And the moon hangs whitely overhead
Like a puff-ball from the thistle sped
Floating about in the crystal sky
For the winds to tell the hour by,
As the sun shows it clear in the liquid blue
Which his arrows are piercing through and through.

About my path, about my ways,
O moon to the tide-waves of my days,
Here in the fields, here by this lawn,
At noon, at night, at eve, at dawn,
And now in summer's pageantry
Each stone, each insect lifts to Thee
A happy wing, a veined side,
A joy in warmth, a song of pride :
To you the glow-worm's emerald fires
Flash like a sunlit city's spires ;
And every dip of every wing
Leaves the air of you echoing.
Veiled like the strength within the sea,
Or the impish power of mercury,
Or the seven beams in the ray of light,
Or the weight of air, or the steps of night,
Or the way two faces love and meet
Indifferent to thousands in the street,
Or the rainbow's end or the rim of sky,
Or the cadence which is poetry,
In all I hear, or feel, or see,
Nowhere revealed, but an energy
Behind all else, and as sharply clear
As the horizon everywhere ;
In nature, in the trance of art,
In reverie, in the human heart
When some enchantment breaks the spell
Which makes us fear our love to tell,—
Unnamed, but not unknown, to Thee
Could I give what you give to me :
One moment, one entranced glance,

One smile upon your countenance,
Your whisper in the stream's refrain,
Your footstep falling in the rain,
Your shadow in each flight of birds
Skimming the lawn : this into words,
No heart so dull, no brain so narrow
But would fall half in love with sorrow :
Missing you, and being missed
'Tis sweeter far than being kissed.

1914

After Drought

THE glassy river steams in the hot sun,
As, parched with drought, the stagnant pools are
shrunken

To narrow puddles ; earth has hardly drunk
One cloud since this long summer has begun.
But hark ! a breathing wind begins to moan,
Puffs the thick air, and warns the cracking trunk
Of every thirsty tree that its dry punk
Will be assuaged with water-spouts anon.

The river hears it coming, feverish gasps
Trouble the waters ; even the still scum
Stirs when the presage of a black cloud clasps
The welkin : one dark moment earth is dumb.
Then bursts the downpour, gurgling voices strain,
And every runnel ripples with glad rain.

1910

Earth and Old Age

MY heart was struggling with a tide of tears,
My dreams were brief and cold,
Horizons narrow-bound with pain and fears :
I knew the bitterness of being old.

Love left me, I was glad to lie alone,
To nurse my pride apart.
No face of those I knew had power to atone
All the life-bitterness which filled my heart.

The earth grew small, my weak cry was to be
Where no pulse teases death,
When Nature's sky-wide arms encompassed me :
I knew the wind's song how it comforteth.

I felt her wild, wild heart against mine beat.
Her voice rang through my soul :
" My flowers are fain of Time, his scythe is sweet ;
On the ripe corn sets autumn's aureole.

" When snowdrops lean towards the pale-faced snow,
Their drooping heads give token
That they are children of the soil and know
Earth's heart with parting is a mother's broken.

“ Why do the curved waves plunge upon the shore,
Strain up the sand for Me ?—

Their sense of separation kindles more
From their communion with the boundless sea.

“ They spy the moon as she shakes out the stars,
The couriers of the air ;

The tides ride back and forward at the bars,
And envy every sail which passes there.

“ The pale stars wander in slow tracks of fire,
Despairful of the sun,

Who tramps his rounds undimmed by their desire
To win beyond their confines and be gone.

“ I watch their strife to burst their separate bounds,
All barriers from Me.

They bleed in beauty from a thousand wounds,
To lose the limits of themselves in Me.

“ Not finding Me the flowers wilt and fall
Back to the bosom of Earth,

Like children tired of play with yearning call
For freedom from the ragged school of birth.

“ . . . A dim veil hangs between all life, and I,
I only thin a place

Where beauty opens windows to your eye
From out the time-worn tenement of space.

“ Amid the mocking and fleet-footed years
Your mother, Earth, is fast.
You weep when old, have you forgot *her* tears
When first from her eternal arms you passed ? ”

1909

On the Common

SHELTERED by pines and leafy woodland beech
Stands Padworth Common, lonely and shut in,
Scanty with yellow, tender streaks of whin,
With subtler notes than Silchester's to teach ;
A spot sequestered, such as travellers reach
When twilight settles, and the views begin
To narrow to the footfall's step, as thin
Shines out the inn-lamp's comfortable speech.

Such tender beauty England gives alone,
And here, for some deciduous last day,
This empty cottage draws my eyes to play
With far domestic idylls of my own,
Where Earth might take my hand and Love condone
The exile of my early feet to-day.

1910

The English Inn

THE end of every journey is an inn.
The Brambletye, The Cock, The Rose in June,
The Spreddeagle, The Dun Cow, The Half Moon,
Castle and Ball, The Feathers, The Linch-pin,
The Bishop's Blaize, The Bent Arms : These, and in
How many another, have I drank at noon,
Or slept by night, or lazed and hummed a tune !
The end of every journey is an inn.

Men converse in the inn and the tavern.
Silence reigns in the strangerless club,
Where a deep-cushioned, leather-lined cavern
Apes the ease of a bench in a pub.
Men are members in one ; but Zeus, Wotan of old
Met men as Strangers, so the tale is told.

1915

Note.—For a description of The Rose in June consult Mr. Walter Raymond's *The Book of Simple Delights*, which also suggested to me the first line of this sonnet.

Poems on Children

Viola's Song

DAUGHTER of the light and air,
 First-born daughter born to-day,
 May it be your grace to wear
 The glory of the autumn hair,
 Red-gold hair of Monica.

Daughter of the air and light,
 Spring-flower of your father's heart,
 May yours be the grace of height
 That is his, a laugh as bright,
 Eyes as quick as his for art.

Daughter of their youngest prime,
 First-born daughter born to-day,
 Like them, may you be free of rhyme,
 Earth and painting, music's time
 In your feet, and gay as they.

Love-child, born within the fold,
 Lamb, thy shepherd lovers pray
 What will keep out winter's cold,
 They gone, you grown a shepherd bold?
 Guilelessness, my Viola.

Gayest of the virtues this !
 (First-born daughter, laugh with me,)
Dancing through your father's bliss,
Glinting gold in mother's kiss
 Gleams the sword Humility.

Therefore clasp it : it will keep
 Flame-like in the hand that dares
Hold it fast ; and let it leap
 When the world your conscience tears !
 Hold it, for the worth it wears
Will light you through your life to sleep.

1913

A Child's Eyes

I THANK you for the mirror in your eyes,
Which shews the image of your dreams of me,
Where what I would I am eternally :
The soul's core of myself without disguise.
I thank you, love, that when my deeds despise
The hopes which mothered them for what they be,
Your eyes look through the veiling hours and see
The soul itself our greatest enterprise.

Thus, when my dreams like broken playthings lay
Among the childish wrack of things foregone,
In tenantless and cowardly disarray,
Your eyes forbade the world's comparison.
'God will not ask,' they said, 'what you have done,
But what idea of Him lit up your way.'

I

For Katie

O THOU dear daughter of the Summer's pride,
Bearing the boon of youth's perpetual Spring,
How to thy youth does my poor manhood cling,
In your years seeking what my own denied !
O piteous drooping mouth,
Freighted with too much beauty :—
A sun-forsaken South
It cries in daily drouth
Against deciduous day and separate duty.
Why seek within my arms
A surcharged ecstasy from thine alarms ?
Can I, indeed, a leper with the smears,
Which fleck the dusty columns of my years,
Offer to thy sweet harms
Easement and peacefulness ?
Can then the ocean
Offer oblivion to the hunted storm ?
That thou shouldst set in motion
The secret fibres, the confused emotion,
Which lurk within thy tears, and crowd thy form
To one who, bound on other business,
Must piteously press
Towards the beckoning armies of the dawn.

Thou hast not felt their mark :
 On thee they smile,
 But their spears early claimed me as their own.
 In primrose-time thou sweetly didst beguile,
 But ere on thy child's heart I could embark,
 That dear-loved ark
 Far from me by some mighty wind was blown.
 And all alone
 They pitilessly set me on their mission,
 To chronicle the purport of their vision :
 They claimed me as their own.
 It was my fate to be
 Dishonourable, dearest, even to thee.
 For when my face grew fair
 Amid the radiance of thy childish hair,
 Another Hand would press
 Between the falling wonder of each tress,
 Plucking me back from there.
 Another Voice would say :
 " Return, poor runaway,
 Who thoughtst to gain a long abode
 Beyond the finding out of God."

II

Her Answer

BUT your eyes sadden when you speak of me,
Your mouth makes mournful music to my own,
As though my childish days were sere leaves blown
Across dark stretches of your memory.

Yes, I laughed often then,
The tresses of my hair
Laugh in the sun again,
Still dance upon the air !

You dream of yesterdays
In songs of sorrow ;
I laugh at your dismays
And cry to-morrow !
I 'mid the groundswirl of the leaves in spring,
Am heedless as they.
Your thoughts : what days have brought, will one day
bring,
Leave me at play.
Memory to you is sadness that days were born to die :
I only feel that life, so good to me, has passed you by.

1908

The Eternal Symbol

I THOUGHT of young faces now gone from me,
Of one that I knew, imperturbably sweet,
When fifteen summers had passed and grew
Into sixteen Springs at the end of it ;

Waves of hair that were frail in the breeze, and fell
Below the fair curve of her shoulders and clung,
As though each hair were a sensitive nerve
Rejoicing to dance to the tunes the wind sung.

I said : She has gone on her own wild way
To a Surrey town where the folk were kind,
And liked a girl in a graceful gown
And loved the smile of a frank young mind.

Yet I tried once more in the memoried lanes
To lure the old life, to be once more fifteen,
But the school children knew not, though fun was as rife,
No share had she now in their games on the green.

So I thanked the gods for a trail turned back,
For an unspoiled hope, for a dream that would last.
Then I gave up casting her horoscope :
I would worship a star that foretells the past !

To the luring West I wandered on

Where the Cotswold Hills slip down to the sea ;

The breezes they blew were so many thrills

To shake off the thrall of the past from me. . . .

The weeks passed, I walked through a market-town,

And there, on the kerb with a book on her knee,

One sat, as though men had no power to disturb

The picture-dreams she read studiously.

We adventured together, that child and I,

Saw tall Troy down, and stole the fire ;

Thus she, whom I lost in a Surrey town,

Had found me again in Gloucestershire.

A Song for One and Twenty

THE old, glad days are over
When once I used to say :
' A sprig of four-leaf clover
Will bring me luck to-day.'
No more upon the hill's side
I chase the shadows now ;
The fields my childhood played in
Must wrinkle to the plough.

No hope for me lies hidden
In any flower or stone,
Such make-believe's forbidden
Now I am Twenty-one.
In clover's stead I see now
The Good and Evil tree.
This birthday is the exit
From Eden's gaiety.

I now must drive the ploughshare
Through fields I did not sow,
And my hand speed the line there
An arrow from the bow.
The hills I used to play on
Are bitter heights to climb.
No clover now shall rescue
The sudden chance of time.

Songs of Exuberance

Ah ! let me keep the vision
Which made my girlhood glad,
Those dreams too have their mission
For lass as well as lad.
Wherever fate may lead me,
Through mists of sand or spray,
The years which follow after
Those dreams will not betray.

1908

The Crayfish-Catchers

WHEN little boys escape from school
 And flies begin to whirl in the air,
 Like figure skaters, over the pool,
 When trout may rise, and skies are fair
 To evening, when the mists have power :
 It is the crayfish-catchers' hour.

A round, flat net, a spool of cord,
 A bloater, a small piece of string
 To fix the bait, a gravelly sward
 Under the water where to fling
 The net, and watch the bait allure :
 The crayfish-catcher needs no more.

" Oh ! see him come ; he creeps his way. . . .
 Wait . . . now he's on, pull hard," a splash.
 The bloater sparkles on the quay,
 The net is scanned, two fingers dash
 Upon the carapace of the fish.
 " When boiled he makes a lovely dish."

I saw six of the tribe thus caught.
 A few slipped back for further joys.
 Medical students, chefs, are taught
 To prize you, crayfish, as these boys
 Do. One for the *décor* that you make ;
 The student for dissection's sake :

From rostrum back to telson he
 Divides your stiff integument.
 The stalked eye, pleurobranchiæ,
 The stomach in the head, the vent,
 He explores all. My debt is this,
Astacus fluviatilis !

1913

Premonitions

YOU have been here, just thus, before !
 Nay, rather feel, some hour will be
 Of which the wings now brush the door,
 Of which the eyes, now veiled, will see
 The radiance promised ;—as a spring,
 When skies are blue in wintry weather,
 Unlocks the hearts of birds that sing,
 In fancied courtship, on gay feather,
 As through the keen, blue air together
 They wing, and fancy it is Spring.

New modes of beauty, laws of verse !
 A ninth string added to the lyre !
 Breathes there not through the universe,
 On this keen day of frost and fire,
 A song half heard, a phrase half rung
 Upon the anvil of the brain ?
 A song some future poet has sung
 With some unborn, yet loved, refrain,
 Which makes us dizzy with pain
 Of an old, strange, unuttered tongue ?

1915

Hymn to the Body

Hymn to the Body

FLOWER of the flesh, the costliest pall
That God could vest the soul withal,
What human speech could find surcease
Of praise to you, God's masterpiece !
Yet since you are the temple
Where I dwell,
The house
That I espouse,
'Tis seemly sure your priest should tell
Some hymn in praise of what God's hand now rears,
By which as peers
Men rise to be his equals and to see
In their own flesh their true divinity.

Turret of ivory builded in one act,
Of memory compact,
What carpentry to make has gone,
The scaffold of your skeleton ?
No idle masons they, no drones,
Who bound the fabric of your bones,
In a mosaic unison.
I know the place, a narrow room,
Upright—most like the final tomb
The structure falls to pieces in,—
A silent womb,
Where piece to piece

Was set, within the short year's lease
Allowed before the work must cease.

Where grows,
As bud from rose,
The fane of flesh these sinews underpin.
What carpentry, I needs repeat,
Laid the foundations of your feet ?

O mystery of flesh, supple and firm,
Yet fated for the worm !
What pigments mixed to make you glow
That our eyes must be dazzled so ?
Methinks you are as a masterpiece which one,
Some lazy painter, eager to convey
A momentary beauty of the sun
Upon his canvas, waited not to weigh
The cost in years which hurried work must pay,
But foolishly forgot
Time lingers not,
How works of art will soon betray
Their cousinship to duller clay,
How time cares not for such as they,
How of all beauty best he loves the beauty of decay.

God too is careless,
Though our flesh,
To fashion in His business,
So small's the mesh,
That alien threads of twisted pain
Have been entangled in the skein.

Day out-vies night in constant chase,
Your jealous beauty to efface.
The arts hold all that man can do,
To conquer time a year or two.
Hard marbles he has taught to know
Your sweep of line, your curves' soft flow,
While his dull pigments mimic fires
Which many a lover's glance inspires.
In God's own image God began ;
By art mankind surpasses man.

1908

To Shelley

SINGER of sky and sunlight and pale streams,
Whose life was like a free unfettered river
Bearing along an argosy of dreams
Wind-blown upon by those whose cold looks shiver
Such passionate hearts as thine, (which seem to quiver
On earth like newly-lighted butterflies
And clap their wings in joy that the great Giver
Has bid his sun on all the world to rise) :
The Hope you raise in us like your song never dies.

Life is more wonderful because you were
For thirty years a lyre on which was breathed
The music of a world-becoming air
Richer in life and love than was bequeathed
To men before you. All that early seethed
In my boy's clamorous heart of vague desires
Resolved their discords as on them was wreathed
(Like some wild-rose above a hedge of briars)
Your crown of pansied thoughts bedewed with rainbow fires.

Whether between broad banks or rocky shores
Your life flows on in rhythmic and strong tide,
Swift in its course unerringly it draws
By many a reach, by many a bending wide,
Towards that sea where the free waves provide
Exuberant life and love for all to share,
Where liberty of soul is not denied,
Where wealth is served not by the slave despair,
But where all men are free as the sea-breezes are.

For all the world to you was as a song
Falling like dew upon the expectant soul,
Which, listening to that music, grows more strong
And constant in pursuit of the dim goal
That shadows man like some faint aureole :
As winter sunshine presages the spring,
As the bright quartz gleams in the blackened coal,
As of the sea the hurrying rivers sing,
So Nature to our ears a star-born hope doth bring.

Now, that desired Beauty whom you vowed
To serve in song, and ' studious zeal ' and love,
Has set you as her rainbow in the cloud,
A radiant bridge between her throne above
And those dull mortals whom she cannot move
By mere delight of being. Dazzling child,
The modern world's first offspring, you shall prove
A light of life for us, unreconciled
To those in days remote who saint or sage were styled.

You commune with me now, and I recall
Enchanted hours, a truant out of doors,
When whispers of some wood or waterfall
Drowsed my full-flooded heart like mandragores.
My body seemed to sleep, but through its pores
Flowed-in a tide which bore my fainting sense
To spheres in which the mounting being soars
Up like the lark into the blue expanse,
Then ebbd, a dying wave into the dim distance.

The painter gazing on the daffodil,
The cowslip, or the gracile pheasant's eye,
Finds in the form which their pure colours fill
Suggestions for some future harmony.
So, gazing on your life and songs, do I
Discern a pattern from which each may draw
Suggestions for his personality
To push between the stones of moral law
A flower-like soul, full-grown, unique, and without
flaw.

How many men and, later, women too
Will thank you for the way you led before !
These, your true heirs, unthinkingly will do
Those deeds whose doing drove you from the shore
Of England into exile ; evermore
New generations will enjoy the fee
Your life fore-shadowed and your eyes foresaw,
Where love is the sole law of liberty
And men are equal in all, but their capacity.

There was a burning arrow in your heart
Which warmed it still in spite of bitter sneers,
And when your children were withdrawn apart
It made you ' meek and bold ' though full of tears.
There stood a comrade undismayed by fears,
While life remained, forever at your side,
To whom you gave a spirit more than hers
When first you bound her to you as your bride.
So love undid the wrong which hate had magnified.

You saw Life as a warm and radiant form
 Walking the earth, a tangible desire,
 Clear as the star which rides above the storm,
 Close as a friend's face leaning o'er the fire ;
 But no frail child of fancy. To aspire,
 To you, was a new creature half in being.
 To give it life and form, and not to tire
 Was only proof that you were clearly seeing,
 For dream and deed are merged in Man's freewill
 decreeing.

But in our panic world a child, though born
 To spread its tendrils on the happy air,
 Finds its free growth is met with frosty scorn
 From those whose hearts are darkened with despair
 At memory of all they did not dare.
 Grown savage by the chain authority
 They bend the tearful child to what they are,
 A slave, the champion of all tyranny,
 The prey of fear, and dupe of dead morality.

Justice and Truth, Freedom, Equality
 Were no phantasmal shadows fancied here
 To screen the sun of stern reality,
 But living presences as loved and near
 As friends, or children, or whate'er is dear
 To man ; whose ways and countenances grow
 Familiar as a child's throughout the year,
 Hallowing the house, making the calm heart glow
 With happiness assured, untouched by fear or foe.

You saw the future as a radiant star
Which drew you through the present world of pain,
Like some tossed seaman glimpsing it afar
Between dark rifts of cloud and stormy rain.
You followed gladly, knew it was not vain
For that starred hope all sufferings to endure ;
For what though waves and shrieking hurricane
Threatened to swamp *your* vessel with its roar,
Mankind will one day land on that discovered shore !

1915

Sonnets on People and Places

The Creation

THE world first broke in splendour like a rose
 Which drinks the morning sunlight. Mist and fire
 Lay on the hills, like music on a lyre,
 As the sun, in silent majesty, arose.
 Valley and hill, and every stream which flows
 Ran out to greet Him, while the joyful choir
 Of man and beast, forth-shadowing His desire,
 First shook the silence of God's long repose.

The cup of life brimmed over as with wine,
 And laughter, like the lightning, joined blue sky,
 Green earth, and azure sea in ecstasy
 As day discovered life's displayed outline.
 When God said : ' Light,' the sun began to shine.
 Matter and dream were one reality.

1913

Hilaire Belloc

Prince of Journalists, Poet and Historian

(A Panegyric)

GREAT writer ! (whose clear head and classic art
Make his taut English soar and sing, as though
It were the bow-string of an English bow
When some fond yeoman's fingers plucked its heart !)
You sweep Truth's temple of the hucksters' mart.
Your hard words and well-hammered knowledge glow
Like burning horse-shoes in the smithy's low
Fear-haunted dark, whereat the Press-gang start.

Maker of history ! whose volumes walk
Within our great tradition : As though Froude
Had waked, in dream, in royal Holyrood
And with the rival Queens exchanged talk,—
We read. And lo ! (as fancied in this scene),
The Future grants us audience. We have seen.

Philip Webb

After seeing Trevor Hall, East Barnet

BEFORE clean work like yours, Praise hides her
head

Ashamed to whisper with her silver tongue.

Silence, receptive of this beauty, hung

A curtain of repose on us, and shed

The peace of pure proportion. Hushed, as dead,

Like a young child to sweet sleep softly sung

By the low cadence of her mother's song,

We two were wrapt in peace, and renderèd

Our souls' awed thanks for such a hymn in stone

Of praise to God, who taught you to direct

The Gothic gable, and the Queen Anne white

Window and pillared porch, with, of your own,

Inspirèd harmonies of mass and light,

Tradition's last, great, master-architect !

1915

The Death of Swinburne

THE slow continuous murmur of the sea
Recalls that voice it loosed upon the land
Back to the billows, though the wrinkled sand
Is graphic still of its insurgency.
The voice of many waters, that was He
Our last great singer, captain of the band
Whose visions never falter, and who stand
Bold trespassers about eternity.

So, on life's shifting sands, his poems trace
The stealthy limits of men's spirit-tide :—
Where many eager breakers shoreward ride
For one which bursts beyond their plunging place.
What though the sea withdraws his wave apace,
His songs record the measure of his stride.

1909

Meredith

HE struck our language as a steel the flint.
A trail of sparks, if sometimes a dull sound
Told how his mind impacted the hard ground,
Or dug obtusely, wrestling for the mint.
Worship of Earth, rejoicing in the hint
Of life's great cycle to and from the mound,
Confirmed his courage, sighed not at death's sound
And gave his prose no less the poet's imprint.

Thus much for style.: but ever his mind's core
Was turned responsive to the cry of spring.

Young love has never found a mouth to sing
More palpitating notes, or wittier score
Of phrases whose terse brevities restore
To wisdom's dusty words their inner sting.

Samuel Butler

I

SANEST of men, whose penetrating eye
Laughed out of sadness at pretensions, mild
In defeat, and like a terrible child
Exposed the vested interests of the high.
Your genius pricks all who would terrify
The mass of men. O gentle Laodicean,
Who would not suffer science to grow wan
In keeping of professors, still supply
A fountain of sly laughter far upflung!
Youth thus may know its friend, and if indeed
We live, as you once fancied, most in those
Who know us, rather than in conscious heed
Of life, your death enlarges and out-grows
Your life, and in us keeps you ever young.

1914

II

If life be memory, life shall learn from thee
Not to go far in search of knowledge, nor
To think those theories most worth fighting for
Which need most art to hedge them : we shall flee
The men who claim portentous gravity
As the true breath of science, who obscure
With hybrid phrases thoughts which else could
score
No victory in enslaving minds still free.
You were the first to prove man's actions are
Far wiser than his words, and that the Truth,
Being young, must pay the penalty of youth
For making long-shut doors first stand ajar ;
That, if desires for some too distant star
Scorch our weak wings, such stars should have no
ruth.

1914

In Parody of Edward Cracroft Lefroy

The Bather

WHERE are the nymphs who dragged young Hylas
down

Into the rich recesses of the pool ?

A schoolboy now, as young and beautiful,
Invites a stream which well might smile to drown.

The sculptor catching him would win renown !

He stoops towards the water, then a flash :

His body cleaves the sunlight, and the splash
Of passage now the laughing bubbles crown.

But see ! he rises twenty feet beyond,

Spurning the deeps which fain would hold him still,

With long, slow strokes which win him to the side.

The water glistens on his sunlit hide !

O for a tonic tide of laughter ! to distil

The mud in which schoolmasters' minds are drowned !

Bruges

QUIET has her colours, which light lingers on
As if the tattered garments of old Time
Made the pale sun in this flat northern clime
More tender of his beams : for gray and dun
Glow here like jewels about the ancient town.
Here Shakespeare might have loitered in his prime,
Iago here Othello urged to crime,
And many a musèd poet strange fancies won.

The little courts, whose balconies divide
The course of each canal, ardours awake
For passions worthy of the scene they make ;
And teach us, as we pace the long quay's side,
Why, like a flame, Dutch art has beautified
Moments of life to common eyes opaque.

Oxford

STRANGE relic ! stone sarcophagus of souls
Who had clear visions of a world, and so
Made haste to set its pinnacles arow,
Planning quad, hall and chapel as three poles
Of a life which one informing spirit controls,
You greet us sadly. In your sunset-glow
You ask us how your sons contrive to grow
So unlike her, whose beauty each extols.

Your stones cried : " Do not sigh to enter in,
To own your staircase, and your seat in hall
Like those great shades which this Year follows
fast " ;
But told, in answers echoing each footfall,
How we, by visions of new worlds within,
May build still greater glories on their past.

1915



Meditation at Twilight

I WATCHED the shadows creeping from the trees,
Pointing their ghostly fingers on the ground,
And in those twilight moments my heart found
An inspiration travelling on the breeze.
These whispering together answered these ;
The climbing moon was leaning to their sound,
Man only in the voice-stirred world around
Was silent, with no message, ill at ease.

O, wherefore have we then the gift of speech
Which, though these have not, yet they understand ?
No spoken word confides what hand-in-hand
Can tell two lovers silent each to each :
If words could frame the thoughts such moments teach
Life's future were a joy which might be planned.

1907

On Bunyan's placing the Village of Morality
hard by the City of Destruction

WHEN I was young, through many bitter hours,
I tired to live a moral, virtuous life.
My instincts and my aims were thus at strife.
I overstrained my natural, native powers.
Now I am old, my spirit no more cowers
Ashamed of its own children. I have made
A code out of my instincts ; undismayed
I follow where they blow, those happy flowers.

Men love great sinners, for the sinner seems
Too busy living " right " and " wrong ", to con.
His instincts and his actions are at one ;
He knows no bar between his deeds and dreams.
Men's love is wise, for with this truth it teems :
Be not more good than you were born, Bion.

Personality

I BEAT against the dangerous gates of birth
 And sprang into the world with bitter pain,
 Struggling in soul and body, might and main,
 To plant a man's foot on the soil of earth.
 Thus fearfully was broken Nature's girth—
 The seasons' cycle of the seed and grain—
 And from old memories of wind, sun, and rain,
 Was formed my flesh, my little human worth.

Now, all my crying is to sink once more
 Into the surge of the devouring sea ;
 To be dispersed as sand upon its shore,
 Be broken as its dancing bubbles be.
 Nostalgia for what death will restore :
 This is the ache of personality.

1909

Resipiscence

Arketon te Hemera—Αρκετον τη ημερα

HOW strange that if the shadow of death's wing
Darkens a face we love we feel that we
Shall soon regret the small untender thing
We let slip past our lips so thoughtlessly ;
Yet when that shadow passes, and the sun
Of health once more in rosy hues doth glow
The sick remembrance of this mood we shun,
And new occasions all unbridled go.
How keen regret in shadow of this fear !
How foolish, too, at the return of shine !
Can love, then, 'scape regret, yet be sincere
In every thought, and look, and word, and line ?
When we are born anew we cease to fret :
In true repentance there is no regret.

1915

The Hour of Awakening

In Memoriam, C. S., obiit November 15th, 1912

WHAT do they know of Death who have not seen
Some gentle spirit turning at his call
To pass the door which opes from Birth's demesne
On to the smiling land where no tears fall?
Sweet is that passing; for the body's health
Seems to the dying tuned to mightier strings,
A treacherous friend resisting our true wealth
By the abundant beating of his wings.
These only know, like Keats, death's easeful bliss,
The well of joy upspringing at his sign,
The eager flight, the gently-welcoming kiss
Within the dreadful precincts of his shrine.
For skull and bones not Death but birth betoken:
Our fears are but the dust still unawoken.

1913

On a Friend's Marriage

I. He

AMBITION and a seasoning of wit,
A fearlessness, and faith he will succeed :
These are his qualities, in these indeed
The fine half of his character is writ.
Reverse the picture : impulse more than grit
Governs his actions. Impulse is the seed
From which spring selfishness and all her breed,—
A bitter home with children watching it.

A tempered will, a more intensive care ;
Impulsiveness let reason underpin :
These gifts would drag him from the gulf Despair,
These fire the beacon God has laid within.
He knows his weakness, wills he then to win ?
Success must be the crown his wife must share.

1908

II. She

SHE wears a jewel above two laughing eyes :
Loyalty to all who find love's pathway there.
For those she loved she everything would dare,
And youthful-like would count her suffering prize.
Too confident in ignorance she spies
No ill in all the world, friends everywhere.
Marriage will school her hard. Let her beware
She stakes not all her life on young surmise.

Pleasure, youth's idle dream, still quickens her.
To some supreme surrender she aspires.
She should be wife and mother,—tenderer
Will grow that heart confided to its fires.
If her life's garden bear not roseless briars
A Child, not Love, must be its gardener.

The Question

SHE gives to him her heart's whole loyalty,
An unthrift of her loveliness ; I fear
A reckless gambler, holding nought too dear,
With no reserve to meet mischances. He
Loves her indeed, but loves her feverishly,
As if between their kisses he could hear
A treacherous whisper : at this time next year
Will you still laugh before futurity ?

Most jealous of love's steadfastness he turns
In questioning appeal to search her eyes :
Faith says they hold his ultimate certainties.
Means this he reads the love there, that she learns
Her hero needs the strength for which she yearns ?
Will wisdom beg of love, can love grow wise ?

The Intellect

THE tall trees leaned towards their shadows where
 The sun had pictured forests on the wave.
 She lay back dreaming, and her silence gave
 An open sign of unresistance there.
 Love, who is nature's paid upholsterer,
 Spread out this woman for his eyes ; the knave
 Scarce needs his art or nature's to enslave
 Wills which have no divine Competitor.

A poet love's dream one morning did beguile,
 But ere the stretching shadows touched the east,
 The intellect awoke, and soon his smile
 Troubled love's waters, puckered them and creased.
 (The sun had fallen as the breeze increased.)
 Love's apple-leaves were dried to camomile.

Love and Language

MY lady asked me if I missed the sight
Of her bright brow, which shone above the
throng

Of courtiers like a star, and did me wrong
Where I sat lonely hugging my despite.
The bitter thought that she was mine by right
Though not by love now, made that love more strong
And jealousy mock mildness did prolong
To say, " Rejoin them, you are their delight."

Thus love, who knows so well what he would say,
Is swift with an apt word to lift the ear
With music ere his cadence dies away,
Making of words true symbols, does forswear
The art he knows, and let his words belie
The bitter pain which he is nourished by.

Love in Loneliness

AH ! bitter-sweet it is to tell you how
The flood of things that my full heart would say
Was choked to silence, with you, yesterday,
And flows its course full free, without you, now.
As some lean wind may through the winter's bough,
Unlet by the leaves' murmur, find its way,
So my soul in your body's absence may
Win closer access than our talks avow.

For the body, like a language, may disguise
Those thoughts which are the test of love's true
height ;
But shall my soul remember while my sight
Takes wings along the waters of your eyes ?
These mountain-barriers which love's fear descries
Love's faith subdues to vantage-coigns for flight.

The Two Silences

THE shell of her I have but not the soul,
The smile, the kiss, the rubious moist lips ;
The heart of her has suffered an eclipse.
The spirit of my love has fled control.
Solitude once was dear ; as a cracked bowl
Silence now jars unresonant of song,
And she, to whom all lovely things belong,
Makes once sweet words like leaden bells to toll.

On silence and on speech the soul takes wing,
Alternate coursers of love's temperate air,
And solitude is sweet, and words may bring
One half of comfort to heart-wrung despair.
But it is in the pauses joy or care
May brim most near to overburdening.

Easter Morning

UPON the happy break of Easter morn
Cheerful I woke, and flung the pane to view
Where myriad pearl-drops of light-stainèd dew
Starred the grey grass like faëry fields of corn.
Christ's sun-forsaken hours I would not mourn,
Nor amazed Mary's shuddering joy renew.
It was in me His Easter-rising grew
To its full flower this soul-ecstatic dawn.

Eternal life pure hearts, here quickened, fills,
An incalculable wind, like the earth breath.
It is our one possession before death.
And after death the same law it fulfils,
And blows, can we say now how it listeth,
What quarter of the sky upon the hills?

1912

The Unpursued

A BOUT the faces which live round me still
How many memories rise both sweet and clear !
But there are some I hardly hold less dear—
Cloud-shadows chased across time's wind-swept hill.
These, quick to pass, time yet has failed to kill.
One haunts me most, unmet since that far year
At some lone inn . . . ah, what fate kind or drear
Have Emily's days now brought her to fulfil ?

A glass of milk she brought me, and she smiled
And I passed on, but one among the throng
Who came and went ; but *one* unreconciled
To count her fated to lie waste among
Those untracked friendships we may not prolong,
To lose the promise of a face so mild.

The King of Terrors

In Memoriam, V. G., nascitur August 30th, 1913

HERE snug and warm, enwrapt, content to feed,
Sense unalloyed by all but will to grow,
I lie in bliss above the reach of woe
My life with law at one, save for the need,
One day, to obey the inscrutable fate decreed
By what I know not, have no wish to know.
Ah ! Could I but escape that doom to go
Hence, where all need is bliss and bliss is need.

My walls contract upon me : it begins,
The dreadful change Fear prophesied would vie
One day yet with my present equity
In horror . . . Fate through all resistance wins
Triumphant ; force-impelled the battle spins,
And fear is drowned in Viola's first cry.

1913

First Feeling Old

MY dreams were wonderful when I was young :
Marvels, of my own right, would come to me,
And all the adventures poets had ever sung,
With no such shipwreck as elsewhere men see !
The ruck, poor slaves, whose hearts had never stirred,
As mine did always, with triumphant faith,
Might grope by the sick light of hope deferred
To Failure's corner in the Porch of Death.
Unique, as was my faith, my fate would be !
Nor did my early years belie this dream,
Till, one day, a wide wave of destiny
Convulsed my heart, and left a gaping seam
Whose red and sagging lips the strange truth told :
Mine was the common fate.—I first felt old.

The Absolute Onion

To the Chelsea Sages

WHAT is the subtlest epithet,
And what the essential quality
Of the onion root *sub specie*
Æternatis:—"strong to wet

"The smarting lids," the child avers ;
"To heal ear-ache," the mother cries ;
"To make brown gravies cheat the eyes
Of meatless men," the cook prefers ;

"To sweet the hash," say the poor ; "To offend
Each tender sense," the rich reply.
But the artist knows efficiency
Is the onion's characteristic trend.

"To lurk within the salad bowl
In a transcendent immanency,
(Avoiding either heresy)
Whose part is greater than its Whole" :—

Thus, to the saint, the onion seems,
The archetype of Almighty God,
Servant of servants, rods the rod,
In its salad universe of dreams.

Press not this parable, laughs the poet :
Like reason's heresies, great and small,
It pierces God's foot with a cobbler's awl.
Only a mystic may, and not rue it.

Is God a radish ? Is not He
The *aliquid ex nihilo fit* ?
The frost which burns, the lamp unlit,
The wrath of the lamb, tragi-comedy ?

The voiceless cry ? The Prince of Peace
Who carries a sword ? The baseless bow ?
The colour blazing in the snow ?
The winter's warmth within the fleece ?

Is God efficient ? Armed, forewarned,
Prescient, equipped, the Fact of facts ?
Or is He not, to men of acts,
The unforeseen, the feared, the scorned ?

Is God efficient ? Armed, forewarned,
Policed, secure, the smell of smells ?
Or is He not the hell of hells,
To men of wealth, the feared, the scorned ?

To mothers He deals scorching tears ;
To masters rebels ; swords to slaves ;
Detection to the merely knaves ;
Exposure to the man of fears ;

Joy to the strong ; to the sharp thorn
The red rose summer's softest breath ;
Recovery at the point of death ;
And blindness to the newly born.

He makes industrious men to starve.
His lazy tramps lie down full fed.
His tasteless water, tasteless bread
Are sweeter than old wine by half.

The new-mown heap of rain-soaked grass
Burns red within, for He is there.
Hot water vanishes to air,
Hot air rains water on His glass.

Fire fears His rain when gutters choke
And gurgle, as with heat outpoured.
His is the unresolved discord ;
The woman's tongue ; the artist's joke ;

The child's delight in obscure themes ;
Youth's greedy curiosity ;
The young girl's nights of melancholy ;
The mother's day dynastic dreams ;

Woman's contempt for man's ideas ;
Masculine scorn for woman's art ;
The jewel of sex within the heart
Of each ; the old maid's bitter tears ;

The boy's shyness, and heart-burnings ;
 The girl's flight (knowing to pursue
 Is far less deadly) ; the boy's true
 Revulsion from what capture brings ;

The husband's rack at the birth-hour ;
 The mother's joy, which frightens him ;
 Their child's ingratitude to them
 When he calls home a prison-tower ;

The young man's hatred of his youth ;
 The old man's knowledge that his years
 Have not brought wisdom ; both their fears
 Lest each should read the other's truth.

. . . " Then the onion's a devil escaped from hell ? "

No : now I have laid its last fold bare,
 Nose, under your burden of carking care,
 God's pungent wit,—its Absolute smell !

1915

Note.—Onion from the French *oignon*, from the Latin *unionem*—*unio* : a single large pearl, that is, poetically, the Pearl of great Price, that is, theologically, God : The One, hence the unique ; hence, among odoriferous underground roots, the one with the most pungent smell : the Absolute odour whose incarnation is the one onion. That which has sublimated all odours into one, The Absolute. Hence Mr. Bradley and his followers have been looking everywhere for what lies all the time under their noses. In seeking for the Absolute they have missed the onion which is efficiency raised to the *n*th power, the power of the Nose. " How charming is divine philosophy " (Milton).

Songs of the Sunshine

Love Song

Sunshine and Song-books

SUNSHINE and song-books
Were given to me.

The trout have the brooks,
The sea-gulls the sea.
But sunshine and song-books
Were given to me.

How else could I tell you
The love that I bear ?
No prose could compel you,
But song-books declare,
(How else could I tell you ?)
The love that I bear.

How could I discover
The love in your eyes,
Were the sun not your lover,
The sunlight your prize ?
How could I discover
The love in your eyes ?

Therefore the Giver
Has granted to me,
No running river,
No spaces of sea,—
Only sunshine and song-books
To shew you to me.

Star Song

I HIT my head, and saw a star,—
My eyes darkened,—near and far
Dancing up and dancing down
Above the pavements of the town.

Of this star I made a friend.
With my eyes it seemed to blend;
Giving them an opal hue
Like a rainbow in their blue.

Deep it sank in my blue eyes,
Sinking, falling ; ecstasies,
Like beaded bubbles in a well,
Ran up from it as it fell.

Up they floated to my lips
Like dew on a rose's petal-tips ;
Jewels of speech from humour's jar
Winked in the torch-light of that star.

Gay with wit I left the street
Where the road and pavement meet,
Wishing for no other friend
Than the star, till life should end.

A Lover Waiting

125

The chain of bubbles which a stone
Unwinds as it hurries down
A well, is broken at the source
Of the spring whence flows its force.

So, at last, my star-chain ended
When my soul with it was blended.
My eyes darkened as before,
But I saw a star no more.

I was lonely, and I wept
For the star of me bereft.
“Come back,” I cried. “Would you,” it said,
“See a star, then hit your head.”

1915

A Lover Waiting

FOR me the sun is weary in the west,
The crescent moon is late upon the sky,
While earth is still the voice of my unrest
Breaks in the troubled music of a sigh.

But you were made for sunlight and for laughter
To sleep in the close arms of my embrace,
That I might wake, and see the moment after
Love chase the flying dreamland from your face.

1907

Song

Where shall Love find a House ?

WHERE shall Love find a house
For us to dwell ?
Under what tall tree's boughs,
By fields where cattle browse,
Or windy hill ?

Breezes now stir that place :
Others are there ;
Folk who like dreams may chase ?
Graceless or with what grace ?
Feckless or fair ?

When shall we find it, sweet,
Or late or soon ?
After long days or fleet,
With fresh or weary feet,
By sun or moon ?

Will Time have scored it o'er
With years grown grey,
Worn away stair and floor ?—
Or raised one house the more
For love to fray ?

Bed Song

SMILES trip across her cheek
 As shadows across the sea ;
 Ah ! would she wake and speak
 In smiles to me !
 Sleep is a robber, who does take
 My love from me until she wake.

I stand as though a spell
 Had changed me to a stone,
 For thus does love compel,
 Save to her alone,
 Me to appear to all the rest
 When I by love am so distressed.

What vintage is so sweet,
 Does so intoxicate,
 Makes hearts so wildly beat
 Which never drank nor ate ?
 That, watching her, I seem more dead
 Standing upright than she in bed.

Spring Song

WHEN I hear the heath wind call,
When the river whispers low,
When the birds their madrigal
Breathe upon the bough :
These are loves which never plead
I to others must not heed.

When the Spring begins to wake
Colour-hunger in my veins,
When the glad, bud-bursting brake
Thrills me with its pains,
Summer is not jealous, nor
Will Autumn turn me from her door.

Learn, then, love, to leave me free
As the wind across the hills,
Wading, where the spring-tides be,
Knee-deep in the daffodils.
So, like Spring, I'll faithful be
Returning every year to thee.

A Don of Fifty Communes with Himself

TOO late alas ! even to say goodbye ;
The film has clouded once again the glass
And we were parted, though the sun rides high :
Too late alas !

Too late alas ! no parting words were spoken,
No foolish promises or frightened sigh ;
Time's river ran between us for a token—
My love and I.

Too late alas ! but still I keep the vision,
The joy of love, unbroken by farewell.
Unasked the dream began, its sudden fission
Left two lives parallel.

What words could say we said, and never travailed
To find a yet unuttered word of love,
Never were spendthrifts of our passion, cavilled
At the lack thereof.

One heart we were one moment, and if after
Time was a signpost where love's paths divide,
Who can decide for either love or laughter
So they go side by side ?

Too late alas ! we wandered from the pasture,
Stept on the highway leaving the soft grass,
Hoped of the future, lived not in the last year.
Too late alas !

Too late alas ! a dream she was and only
Are happy dreams that always dreams remain.
Life is a compromise, and love less lonely
In dreams again.

Too soon alas ! we leave our reverie
To place on life a load it cannot bear.
Why must we slip 'twixt hope and memory
Giving life a share ?

1908

Growth

DOES your present seem to you
More vivid than your past?
Or is it stale, a sucked-up dew,
Bloomless and overcast?

Has your laugh the silver ring
It had ten years ago?
Have your words the adventurous sting
Of wisdom in them now?

Do you envy others free
Of the open sun?
Does your sense of what might be
To your past make moan?

. . . If the gods are glad of you
Your now you will not grieve.
Then, though glad the morning dew,
Exquisite the eve!

A Message from the Muse to the
Bushey Repertory Theatre

Thaleia :

When laughter grew looked on askance
In temples made with hands,
The Churches' loss was the Drama's chance ;
My Church of Laughter stands.

Melpomene :

" He spake the Word, *and they were made.*"
Sky, stars, and flowers of the sod ;
No grander tribute could be paid
To poetry or to God.

Thaleia :

Joy is the proper child of strength,
We therefore bid you choose
Between the lyric of sad length
And the laughter-loving Muse.

Melpomene :

Tragedy is the loftier lyre,
Where, beyond laugh or tears,
Man's fragile children of desire
Are pit against the spheres.

A Message from the Muse 133

Thaleia :

Comedy, subtlest of the arts,
And rapier quick in thrust,
Twitches the mask off, whence there darts
The soul from human dust.

My laughter wakes the melting mood,
The mood in which you keep,
Tense, intellectually gay,
Touched—not beguiled—to weep.

Melpomene :

Because the Word thus moves all men,
And becomes Flesh on my Stage,
Drama and Theatre have again,
As once, Church privilege.

The Comic shows you from within,
Within too, but from above,
Tragedy holds the glass wherein
Pity and Terror move.

“Where two or three are gathered,” then
(The great phrase still recurs !)
Souls are re-made, the Word calls men
In theatres (for who hears).

134 Songs of Exuberance

Thaleia :

I come upon you unaware :
I startle you with sly delight ;
Laughter is God-like, I declare,
For "*He comes like a thief in the night.*"

Thaleia and Melpomene :

We two join hands then, lift the mask
A moment ere the curtains rise,
Before the laugh or tears, to ask
Your minds to guide your eyes.

November 29, 1913

NOTE.—These lines appeared on the programme of the first production of the Bushey Repertory Theatre, which took place on the above date. The story of that production, and of the local movement of which it was the first public expression, has been told by me in the postscript to *The Silent Heavens*, to which the curious reader is referred. The programme, I am glad to say, was pretentious, and the deliberate attempt to give it a *cachet* is shown by the cover-design, which was the joint work of those two accomplished artists, John Copley and Ethel Gabain.

Higgledy-Piggledy

The Choice

GAY working hours, whose laughter
Has weaned my soul from sorrow,
Which shall I follow after,
George Moore or George Borrow ?

The life in the Temple, the lonely,
The bookish, the bachelor hours,—
Or the wisdom of walking, where only
Men gladden like flowers :

To walk through green lanes or gold corn-fields,
The steaming, hot sex in the earth,
Where rank is life's sweetness, and morn yields
True scents of man's birth ;

Where the day, like a child on awaking,
Warm, drowsy, and damp at its pores
With the sweat of sweet sleep and dream-making
Is flushed out of doors !

(The young birds cry in the dew,
Smoke rises, where under the hill
A traveller's tent stops you
To dream at will).

Two lives there are : a rafter,
Book-writing,—or the roadway to-morrow.
Which shall I follow after,
George Moore or George Borrow ?

1913

A Week Later

THE hours have passed by, oh, so slowly !
Since the day when your promise you gave,
And every hour you've rejoiced in it wholly,
Say that you have !

O, my dear, to declare your hid feeling
So freely, did love make you brave ?
You have told all the tied lips were sealing,
Say that you have ?

I was weak in the wind of his coming,
Through my arms raced the tide of his wave,
Your body his harbour becoming,
To the spent sea the cave.

So dumbly you waited his asking,
And then like a reed in the wind
You swayed, in a moment unmasking
What floods lay behind.

1911

Fallow Time

I N spring I thought always to lie
Like sun-dazed flowers, to lie and dream,
To thrill always to the poet's cry :
" Nature will not betray thee," I
Thought always to enjoy the sky,
And love the sword-play of the stream.

But yesterday a devil came
Into the heart of one I love,
Who made my bed a bed of shame,
My house his hell, my joy a graeme,
Like burning ice my brain became.
Nature I then sought comfort of.

On the road I walked there was none to see
(Summer's fires sank in the autumn sheaves)
How the red and the gold of the sere-scorched tree
Were ashy-cold as my love to me.
Blind were my eyes, and forsaken of thee,
O Earth, forsaken of all thy leaves.

Grief is one long slow moment. Know,
(For flour not for husks do the mill-wheels wind)
Suspense will crush the spirit-ears so
That the stones might be stopped, and the water-flow
Grind no more, though the gristless mill-wheels go
As fast as when there was corn to grind.

Am I changed then ? or is she whom I love
Changed ? Since her body, in earth's dear way,
In the seven years gone will have shed enough
To be no more hers than she will prove,
In seven years more, to be mistress of
That shape which fills me with pain to-day.

1913

The Young Wife

HOW sweet and dewy was her face.
Like stones' paths down a well her eyes.
Her laughter rippled to a kiss.
Her health wore all the rose's dyes.

To-day a weariness has passed
Its hands in shadows o'er her skin.
The muscles stare, and overcast
Her roses, losing blood, wear thin.

Those eyes, which harboured morning dew,
Flicker uncertain fires to-day.
Too many children make her rue
The fickle charms of yesterday.

1913

The Little House

WITH days of hated toil I won
A little house in Bethnal Green,
Dreaming of wealth, and nothing done
For all the dreary days' routine.
A meaner man was never seen.

And yet I had exchanged a flat
Of two rooms, kitchen, and no hall,
Servantless, for a villa that
Two storeys had, a bath and all
That comfort makes reciprocal

On steady earnings. I had now
A garden, drawing-room, and one spare
Wherein a friend might lodge, nor vow
Aught to complain of ; what was there
To make life hateful or bring care ?

Before I had these things I sighed
For comforts, now I found that they
Create strange needs and magnified
The nameless voice which irks to stay
By soft arm-chair and coat of gray.

I said : I will regard these things
As weeds which choke the spring of life.
I'll burn the books, jump reckonings,
Nor be ashamed to beat my wife.
The next day I awoke in jail
And sang like any nightingale !

1912

The Way of the Will

TO draw strength from the ground like Antaeus,
To wake music from Nature like Pan,
Leave the town, where the rich men decree us
To drudge, machine-minders not man,
Seek where life first began !

The Earth not the world for adventure,
The soil not the plot for thy peace,
The hill not the house as indenture
Of freedom, from comfort's disease
Embrace thy release !

Be a part of the landscape as horses,
Which stale as they pause at the plough.
Not a man at the coulter divorces
His life from their life, and shalt thou
Shun the sweat of thy brow ?

1913

Love's Philosophy (New Version)

MY love and I do fight
One day in seven,
And thus we know from Hell
The joys of Heaven.

Some married lovers say
No angry word
Disturbs their harmony,
Or sweet accord.

But is that love, say we,
That never knows
Its opposite, or a true flower
A thornless rose?

For who would care to hold
God's greatest treasure,
If by the devils left
Without a measure

Whereby he might test well
The worth God set
On what Satan so fumed
And raged to get?

So may next year, as this,
Give blows and jeers,
And nights of bitterness
And woman's tears.

Then shall my man and I,
In love still pent,
Know ours to be indeed
God's sacrament.

1912

The Meeting

AT last I saw her. Hunger for her face
Had peopled the long interval, which now
One quick touch of two hands, one stupid bow,
Narrowing the long days to a second's space,
Briefly avow.

And all the stored-up thoughts, the plans to tell,
Which filled each day with dream-fed hours indeed,
Had in this slip of time to say their meed,
To make this moment linger by a spell,
Of time to plead.

1911

Jaques's Letters

A BUNDLE of old letters in my hand !
My eyes still glisten o'er the faded page.
There's few could write like him. To understand
You must have met him at that early age

I saw him first : his black hair spread like wings
Above the ivory forehead, calm and pale ;
Have seen his eyes laugh as some new thought springs
To flash his wit on things you'd fancied stale.

How beautiful the script, clear-formed yet flowing,
As unself-conscious as his life was brave.
A gay humility, fresh growth bestowing,
In every look, in every word he gave.

Men thought him strange, disturbing. When he met
The world's half-dozen masters, (as I knew
Before he met them !) they were first to set
Himself beside them, hardly yet his due !

I grew into his shadow, then admired
The way he laughed my praise off. Live your life,
Your life, not mine, he said. So it transpired.
I went my own way through the press of life.

This friendship was a flame ; and, since true love
Is but to see the beauty piercing things,
My friend was like the comrade God above
Sends novices in mystic communings.

1914

Citywards

THE tides of sleep crept backwards, I
On the cold shore of Day did lie,
Bare to the busy swarm of schemes
That Day sent to destroy my dreams.

These brought no ransom for my soul,
For all lay under Day's control.
My dreams were routed till sweet Night
Hid me once more in Day's despite.

When Night's tide hid the land again
Sleep washed my eyes with poppy stain,
For on the noisy shore of Day
My dreams decay, my dreams decay.

1909

The Anniversary Time's Revenges

THE wind raced from the west that night,
The cottage creaked and groaned.
Though each told each that our delight
For many a year began that night,
We feared more than we owned.

Yet what could hurt us?—she and I
Two lovers that day wed.
Earth's kindred musics in the sky
Throbbled as a viol through her, and I,
I had no past to dread.

We lived a dream of life, we two,
Like that Dutch painter sees.
Daily more dear our cottage grew,
Frequent with laughter, for us two
A waking dream to please.

I think she was a holy thing
That year, too brief for tears.
Flower-like she grew, and as flowers bring
Beautiful joys, a holy thing,
Peace, vanquished all my fears.

But ah ! too lordly love became,
A proud king asking all ;
Too keen for bliss, his hard clear flame
Burnt up her sweetness, she became
Weak at the autumn fall.

That night it was : a piteous rain,
A steadfast dripping sky.
Quite like a pall the counterpane
Lay upon her, as soon the rain
Upon her grave would lie.

A beggar knocking at our door
We took in long ago.
Love was his name, and, O before
We knew him for a king, our door
Opened—how should we know ?

Beggar and king, and baby now,
A traitor from the first !
Love's three disguises : first the vow ;
The crown, the royal robes ; and now
The mocking, and the thirst.

I move about the cottage door,
A nurse walks to and fro.
Our baby at her breast, the more
To darken still the shadowed door
My love once lighted so.

And in its staring eyes each year
Like beacon lights will shine
The warn of rocks we sailed too near
Unheeding the red lights last year
In my love's eyes and mine.

Listlessness

MY will is like a swallow, who has built
A nest with mud beneath the tall house-eaves,
And reared two nestlings till, because they spilt
Off-scourings on the panes, the house-wife heaves
Off from the wall to expiate their guilt.

Whereat the mother, with quick, eddying flight,
Up to the wall and off again doth fly,
As if no touch, nor witness of her sight,
Sufficed to prove her brood condemned to die ;
And her without two mouths to feed to-night.

No beating of her wings upon the air,
No clinging now upon the vacant wall
Can kill the knowledge of what should be there,
Or that her building was too strong to fall,
Or that all other nests are as they were.

Even so, my will to-day, as if a loss,
Like hers, had made all effort seem in vain
Stands idly witness, quick to turn and toss,
With a numb loathing to begin again.
Nor may it raise the spell, nor lift the cross.

Who, thus, has seen Time stare him in the face

While the sweet hours with steady pulse go by,
But envied them the absorption of their pace,

As their calm steersman with wind-blinking eye
Is lost in the mid rapture of the race.

Yet so I watch myself ; my hands fall down,

And I stare on my life as a bad dream,
In whose green sea of vacant thoughts I drown

The while my will, with one last flickering gleam,
Drifts to the fall which death's last bubbles crown.

1914

The Seed in the Heart

AS the heart which burns with love
Fears for the beloved's head
Everything beneath, above
Gay but half afraid :
Just because she is so sweet,—
So April's sun and tears soon meet
Because the spring is fair but fleet,
Spring the fated maid.

Earth's blue skies are clear and bright,
The furrowed fields grow tall and trim,
There is nothing to affright
In the hazy, dim
Dawn, till the sun averts his face
And buries his head in the cloud's embrace,
As his gold and her dark hair interlace,
Straining her to him.

These fears of joy do I not know,
These tender, unexplained alarms ?
Has my love's voice not whispered low
And broken, while her arms

Enwound me fast till the storm passed by
Into silence, which rocked her happily
Till she sighed in her sleep, and her tears grown dry
Smiled in morning's calms.

What is this seed in the heart of love,
This mingling of mist, this shadowy wing
Which brushes the soul on the surface above,
Which stirs in the sap of spring ?
Is it the Lover bursting through
The veil of the face,—that fire in the dew
Which God has set as the sign of his true
Innermost blossoming ?

We only know that the radiant face
Suffuses with a light so rare
That joy and pain here interlace
Changing the names they bear.
That this moment trembles with sudden light,
Like the ghost of the dawn in a summer night
When the grey grows gold, and the promise bright
Of a day surpassingly fair.

On the other side of despair and hope
There is a mood of which no name,
No art, no dream has divined the scope ;
And no poet can claim
To have fashioned for those who know it not,
To revive it for those who have it forgot,—
Though of art, love, dream, the impregnate spot
And quintessential flame.

For love is as the waters wide,
And the soul like a dry sea-weed
Awaits their ever-rising tide
Its stiffened arms to knead.
On this supporting sea expand
The soul's leaves, floated by God's hand
Each frond unfolds and is gently fanned,
Rocked on His waves and freed.

Who shall measure the thoughts to flow
Along the current of that tide ;
The fears which shudder, the joys that grow,
The vessels opened wide ;
The penetrating sense which cleaves
The soul-anemone's trembling leaves,
At one with the bosom on which it heaves
Rhythmical, satisfied ?

Presages of strange new birth,
All alarms our hearts know of,
Every mood of sky or earth :
Each, like Noah's dove,
Retrieves us on home-pinioned wings
A straw, for all heart-breaking things
Here, point the tide or wind which brings
The goal of Life and love.

Lines for a Friend's Volume

G O, little book, and sail the seas
Of many men's propensities ;
But, (since who wrote you will not dare)
Take this of your god-father's care :
A little ark of Fancy made
Will face men's buffets unafraid,
For Fancy has a way with her
To catch the incurious listener,
A certain strangeness to compel
Attention,—if from Fancy's well
The bucket of its words is drawn,
Unpollute and naïvely done.
So I will not send before you
A bell-ringer to O Yes for you.

No : you'll be bought but by few friends,
And, if among them any lends,
A few estrangèd eyes shall see
The wit which first amusèd me.
A few will buy you (from the prints),
A fewer more from personal hints.
Then for a many years you'll lie
Buried in some drab library,

Until,—for Fancy takes good care
Of every true-born child of her—
Someone shall stumble, by research,
Upon the shelf on which you perch.

He'll turn from back to title-page
All unexpecting to engage
More than a moment ere he throws
You back, and on your shelf bestows
A running finger. Yet he'll stop
To give one glance more, ere he drop
You, with the mental inner laugh
Which is of wit the better half.
So, shall he pass an hour with you,
Bouquin ; then join your retinue.
Thus will your spirit glow again,
And men shall ask : who was the man
Who wrote so gaily. Then live I,
A Prophet, in my prophecy !

The Print Room at the British Museum

TAKE that small woodcut that you liked to-day,
Where some late traveller rounds a bend of hill
And sees his hut, a dark mass by the road,
Returning homeward. How the road's curve here
Carries our eyes in quickened sympathy
To where his home lies crouching, and we share
His dream of fireside and the peace of night.
That little moment as he rounds the bend
Awakes in us home-sickness for the hearth.
It is here fixed, and dwelt on, and preserved,
Till what was brief, forgotten ere perceived,
Becomes eternal. So we joy because
The artist has redeemed one point of Time
From Earth's pre-emptive bond, and pencilled there
All the home-comings since the world began.
This makes us sigh : " Ah ! might all life be thus ; "
As this tired traveller's homeward steps become
A march of beauty,—“ all our days like this.”

For Beauty is the summer rose of Time
Whose petals strew its sun-dial : Its dew tears
Are those of Time's young children at his tomb,
Where art commits him to eternal flames,
The little, laughing flames God warms His hands at,
Until His thoughts take planetary shape

Starting as worlds, flowers, sparrows, shadowy dooms,
Atlantic storms, white crystals, or sad tales,
Or Bacchic dancing, or resolve in sand,
Or feed the flicker of a tap-room fire.

By gipsy waggons, at some Michael's fair,
As His thoughts breathe upon the jostling crowd,
The strident music quickens, the loud girls
Flush, and laugh invitations to the men,
In each of whom Endymion awakes,
Till one, the young one ogling the dark girl,—
More ready than the rest to catch in flight
The crimson, falling petals of the Rose,—
Laughs like a Pan now, and to-morrow paints
The very picture of Madonna there.
For mind is but the rind, sex the pure core,
And God has made the senses roads to Him.

So one man's dream now breeds in other souls
The hope to draw such passing moments out
Into a life of beauty, as wherein
That image of God's thought men call a picture.
Wonder not, then, that beauty should be sad.
For beauty is the running highway through
The little parishes of Space and Time
Which we pass by into God's land of dream,
And know ourselves in exile, till we pass.

The Everlasting Voices

THE everlasting voices are heard upon the air ;
Murmurous with their music are silence and the
sea.

Where is the heart so overwhelmed with care
As to be dull to their searching melody ?

The trees are ever swaying to the wind's sad tune,
The grasses ever dance beside the whispering stream
Tides and travelling clouds must run before the moon,
Month follows month in never-changing dream.

Out of the heart of memory and tears
Earth feeds the lamp of beauty with fresh flame.
The everlasting voices assailing human ears
Are the immemorial memories whence we came.

1913

Receptivity

AS shadows on the white wall of my room
Thrown by blue curtains in the sun-sought way,
The images of God run o'er and stray,
Gray blossoms, on the blankness they illumine.
For the sweet flesh, opaque, delights to loom,
Between God's arrows slanting to my heart,
A screen to image, ere His sun depart,
Fancies else never broken into bloom.
For who has watched the precious sunlight spend
Ungarnered beams on a white road in May,
But wished slow clouds, or shadow-sprinkling spray
Might to that wasted light a form extend?
So let the curtains of thy mind attend
What shadows of strange dreams their folds waylay.

Bibliographical Note

NONE of these poems has appeared before in print with the exception of "The Eternal Symbol" in the now defunct *Tramp*; the song "Where shall Love Find a House?" and the two sonnets "Love in Loneliness" (partly rewritten), and "On the Common" in the extinguished *Onlooker*, and "Sunshine and Song-books," my muse's firstling, which appeared in a college magazine wittily called *The Second Book of Kings*, which was revived, whether to beget a Basileon Gamma or not I do not know, in my last summer term at Cambridge. A truncated version of the "Spirit of Rain" appeared in *Poetry and Drama*. To the editors, all of whom seem to have survived their periodicals as I write, I am indebted for permission to reprint them.



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